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BYZANTINE HISTORY AND CULTURE



The Sons of Constantine, AD 337–361

In the Shadows of Constantine and Julian

Edited by

Nicholas Baker-Brian · Shaun Tougher

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Cardiff University
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Colossal bronze statue head of a Constantinian emperor (both Constantine I and Constantius II have been suggested), together with left hand and spiked globe, Musei Capitolini, Rome.
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Cardiff, November 2019

Nicholas Baker-Brian
Shaun Tougher

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Nicholas Baker-Brian is Reader in Ancient Religions at Cardiff University. He is the author of *Manichaeism. An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (2011), and co-editor of *Emperor and Author. The Writings of Julian the Apostate* (2012) and *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity* (2018). He is presently completing a monograph on the reign of Constantius II, and is involved in a project on religious exceptionalism in Late Antiquity.

Caïllan Davenport is Senior Lecturer in Roman History at Macquarie University, Sydney, and Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt. He is the co-editor of *Fronto: Selected Letters* (2014) and author of *A History of the Roman Equestrian Order* (2019). His current project is a study of rumour and gossip about Roman emperors from Augustus to Late Antiquity.

Christine Greenlee is a writer and independent researcher. She has recently completed her PhD at the University of St Andrews. Her research has primarily focused on the life and career of Libanius during the reign of Constantius II.

Mark Humphries is Professor of Ancient History at Swansea University. He has published widely on aspects of the political, religious, and social history of Late Antiquity and is an editor of *Translated Texts for Historians*. He is completing a study of late Roman civil war.

Michael Kulikowski is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of History and Classics at Penn State, where he has served as the Head of the History Department for the past decade. His books include *Imperial Triumph: The*

Roman Empire from Hadrian to Constantine (2016) and *Imperial Tragedy: From Constantine's Empire to the Destruction of Roman Italy* (2019). He is presently at work on the Landmark Ammianus Marcellinus.

William Lewis received his PhD with a thesis on the Roman empire under the Constantinians from Cardiff University. He specialises in politics, usurpation, and civil war in the later Roman empire, and he is working on the division of the Roman empire between the sons of Constantine.

Meaghan McEvoy is Lecturer in Byzantine Studies at Macquarie University, specialising in late Roman political history. Her publications include *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD367–455* (2013) and 'Constantia: the last Constantinian', *Antichthon* 50 (2016): 154–179. She is working on a monograph on the fifth-century Roman empress Licinia Eudoxia for Oxford University Press.

Peter Sarris is Professor of Late Antique, Medieval and Byzantine Studies at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (2006), *Empire of Faith. The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700* (2011), and co-editor of *The Novels of Justinian – A Complete Annotated English Translation*, 2 vols (2018). His current research includes the development of Eurasian trading networks between Constantinople, Persia, Central Asia and China, and the emergent contours of the 'confessional state' in the age of Justinian.

Daniëlle Slootjes (PhD 2004, UNC Chapel Hill) is Associate Professor of Ancient History at the Institute of Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen. She has published extensively on late antique Roman administration, geography, the history of early Christianity and crowd behaviour in the period of Late Antiquity and the Byzantine empire.

Jan R. Stenger is Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Würzburg. His research focuses on Greek lyric poetry, literature and culture of Late Antiquity, and ancient Christianity. He has published monographs on the Greek poet Bacchylides (2004), on identity construction in Late Antiquity (2009) and on John Chrysostom (2019). He has just completed a research project on education from 300 to 550 AD.

Shaun Tougher is Professor of Late Roman and Byzantine History at Cardiff University. He has published extensively on Julian the Apostate, eunuchs and the Macedonian dynasty. His publications include *Julian the Apostate* (2007), *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (2008), and *Emperor and Author: The Writings of Julian the Apostate* (2012) (co-edited with Nicholas Baker-Brian). He is completing a monograph on Roman eunuchs.

John Vanderspoel is Professor of Roman History at the University of Calgary. He is the author of *Themistius and the Imperial Court*, as well as numerous articles and reviews. His current projects include work on the emperor Julian, the women of the Tetrarchic period, and Sasanian kingship.

Eric R. Varner is Associate Professor of Art History and Classics at Emory University. He is the author of *Mutilation and Transformation. Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (2004), and is presently completing a monograph entitled *Grotesque Aesthetics. Transgression and Transcendence in the Age of Nero*.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>AC</i>	<i>L'Antiquité classique</i>
<i>AClass</i>	<i>Acta classica</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AncW</i>	<i>Ancient World</i>
<i>AntTard</i>	<i>Antiquité tardive</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>Blockley</i>	R.C. Blockley, <i>The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus</i> , vol. 2, <i>Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes</i> (Liverpool, 1983)
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>Byz</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>CPh</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>G&R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>

GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HSPb	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HThR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ILCV	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
JbAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JLA	<i>Journal of Late Antiquity</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JÖAI	<i>Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JThS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LSA	<i>Last Statues of Antiquity</i> (http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk/)
NC	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
PCPhS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
PLRE	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , vol. 1, A.D. 260–395, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris (Cambridge, 1971)
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RIC	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i>
RPh	<i>Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes</i>
RSA	<i>Rivista storica dell'Antichità</i>
TAPhA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TM	<i>Travaux et mémoires</i>
VChr	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

316 (Summer)	Birth of Constantine II
317 (March)	Crispus and Constantine II made Caesars (along with Licinianus)
317 (7th August)	Birth of Constantius II
320/323 (?)	Birth of Constans
324 (September)	Defeat of Licinius at Chrysopolis
324 (November)	Constantius II made Caesar. Founding of Constantinople
326 (May)	Crispus tried and executed at Pola. Death/disappearance (?) of Fausta
<i>c.</i> 328	Death of Helena, mother of Constantine I
333 (December)	Constans made Caesar
335	Constantina marries Hannibalianus
335 (September)	Dalmatius made Caesar
337 (May)	Death of Constantine I
337 (June)	Shapur II's first assault on Nisibis
337 (June/July)	Coup against relatives and associates of Constantine I in Constantinople
337 (September)	Meeting of the brothers Constantine, Constantius and Constans in Pannonia
340 (April)	Civil war between Constantine II and Constans in Aquileia. Death of Constantine II
341 (Autumn)	Dedication Council of Antioch
342–343 (Winter)	Constans in Britain
343 (Late Summer)	Council of Serdica
346	Second siege of Nisibis
348	1100th Anniversary of the foundation of Rome
350 (January)	Murder of Constans and the beginning of Magnentius' usurpation
350 (March)	Vetranio acclaimed Augustus in Illyria
350 (Summer)	Third siege of Nisibis
350 (June)	Nepotian acclaimed Augustus in Rome. Killed within a month along with his mother Eutropia, half-sister of Constantine I
350 (July/August)	Decentius made Caesar by Magnentius
350 (December)	Retirement of Vetranio
351 (March)	Gallus made Caesar; married to Constantina

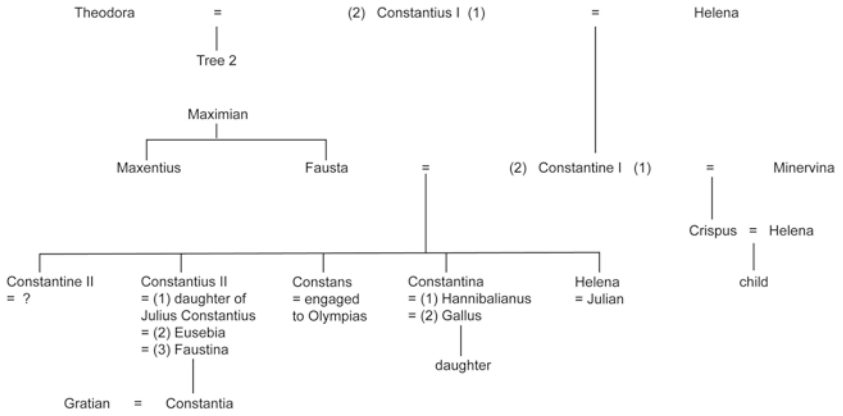
351 (September)	Battle between troops of Constantius and Magnentius at Mursa
<i>c.</i> 353	Constantius II marries Eusebia
353 (August)	Death of Magnentius in Lyon
353 (July–August)	Revolt of Poemenius at Trier
353 (November)	Beginning of Constantius' <i>tricennalia</i>
354	Death of Constantina
354 (October)	Trial and execution of Gallus at Pola
355	Themistius adlected to the Senate of Constantinople
355 (August)	Rebellion of Silvanus in Cologne
355 (November)	Julian made Caesar; married to Helena, daughter of Constantine I
357 (April/May)	Constantius' visit to Rome
357 (Spring/Summer)	Julian's victory over Alamanni at Strasbourg
359 (Summer)	Siege and fall of Amida to the Sasanian army
359 (Summer–Autumn)	Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia
360 (Spring?)	Council of Constantinople
360 (Spring)	Julian proclaimed Augustus by troops in Paris
<i>c.</i> 361	Constantius II marries Faustina
361 (November)	Death of Constantius II in Mopsucrenae
361	Birth of Constantia, daughter of Constantius II and Faustina

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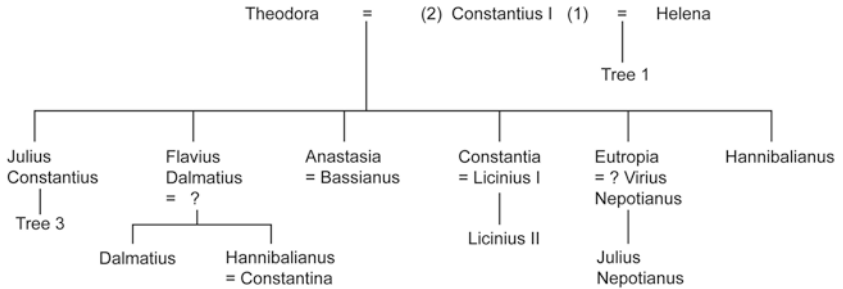
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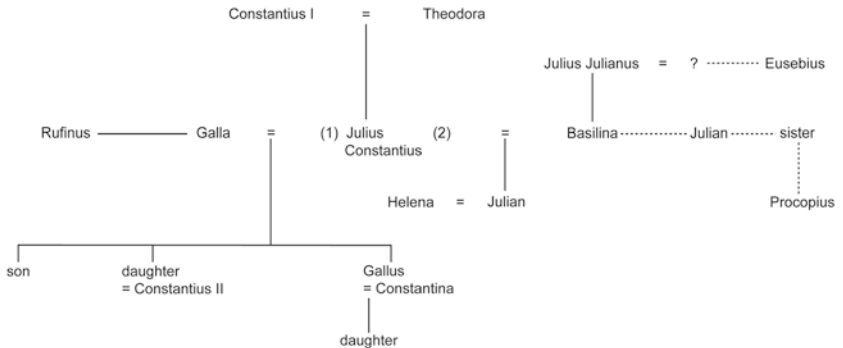
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: In the Shadows of Constantine and Julian—The Sons of Constantine, AD 337–361

Nicholas Baker-Brian and Shaun Tougher

The voice of the dying emperor had recommended the care of his funeral to the piety of Constantius; and that prince, by the vicinity of his eastern station, could easily prevent the diligence of his brothers, who resided in their distant governments of Italy and Gaul. As soon as he had taken possession of the palace of Constantinople, his first care was to remove the apprehensions of his kinsmen, by a solemn oath which he pledged for their security. His next employment was to find some specious pretence which might release his conscience for the obligation of an imprudent promise. The arts of fraud were made subservient to the designs of cruelty; and a manifest forgery was attested by a person of the most sacred character. From the hands of the bishop of Nicomedia, Constantius received a fatal scroll, affirmed to be the genuine testament of his father; in which the emperor expressed his suspicions that he had been poisoned by his brothers; and conjured his sons to revenge his death, and to consult their own safety by the punishment of the guilty. Whatever reasons might have been alleged by

N. Baker-Brian (✉) • S. Tougher
Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
e-mail: Baker-briannjl@cardiff.ac.uk; TougherSF@cardiff.ac.uk

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these unfortunate princes to defend their life and honour against so incredible an accusation, they were silenced by the furious clamours of the soldiers, who declared themselves, at once, their enemies, their judges, and their executioners. The spirit, and even the forms of legal proceedings were repeatedly violated in a promiscuous massacre; which involved the two uncles of Constantius, seven of his cousins, of whom Dalmatius and Hannibalianus were the most illustrious, the Patrician Optatus, who had married a sister of the late emperor, and the Praefect Ablavius, whose power and riches had inspired him with some hopes of obtaining the purple. If it were necessary to aggravate the horrors of this bloody scene, we might add, that Constantius himself had espoused the daughter of his uncle Julius, and that he had bestowed his sister in marriage on his cousin Hannibalianus. These alliances, which the policy of Constantine, regardless of public prejudice, had formed between the several branches of the imperial house, served only to convince mankind, that these princes were as cold to the endearments of conjugal affection, as they were insensible to the ties of consanguinity, and the moving entreaties of youth and innocence.¹

Thus Edward Gibbon in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* characterised the period during and immediately after the death of Constantine I, when the sons of the emperor rose to the rank of Augustus and acquired the empire as an inheritance from their father. As Gibbon had observed earlier in the work—as highlighted by John Pocock²—“in elective monarchies, the vacancy of the throne is a moment big with danger and mischief”.³ Gibbon’s moralising historiography found fertile ground in the case of Constantine’s succession: his creative fusion of his themes and sources, including his revisionist treatment of Philostorgius’ account of Constantine’s will,⁴ impressed upon his readers the idea that the succession of Constantine’s sons was a time of broken oaths, compromised bishops, gullible emperors, mutinous armies and internecine slaughter. However, the appeal of this brief period to both ancient and modern authors has lain not simply in its seemingly salacious details but also in its explanatory potential. The circumstances behind the succession of Constantine Caesar, Constantius Caesar and Constans Caesar to the most senior position in the imperial college have been regarded as supplying an

¹ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (1781), chap. 18, ed. Womersley 1994, vol. 1: 662–663.

² Pocock 2015: 52.

³ Vol. 1 (1776), chap. 3, ed. Womersley 1994, vol. 1: 98.

⁴ Cf. Burgess 2008: 19–21.

explanation both for the dysfunctional nature of the House of Constantine and for the ultimate failure of the dynasty as an imperial enterprise. An early exponent of the family's dysfunctionality was one of its own members. Julian "the Apostate" (r. 361–363), Constantine's nephew and a cousin of Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans, offered an especially incisive portrait of his relatives' failings.⁵ However, while the substance of the portrait was familial, the context was political. In the super-charged atmosphere following Julian's acclamation as Augustus by his troops in Paris in spring 360, Julian wrote letters to a number of city councils (including the Senate in Rome) in which he justified his rebellion against Constantius II. Central to Julian's strategy was the transformation of Constantius II, the reigning emperor, into a tyrant, the antithesis of a just and temperate ruler.⁶ His role in the "great slaughter"—to quote Libanius' characterisation⁷ of the dynastic cull that took place in the weeks following Constantine's death that removed a host of potential claimants from the lines of succession—was thus paramount in projecting the image of Constantius II as a ruler whose ruthlessness led him to sacrifice his own family: "Six of my cousins and his, and my father who was his own uncle and also another uncle of both of us on the father's side, and my eldest brother, he put to death without a trial; and as for me and my other brother, he intended to put us to death but finally inflicted exile upon us; and from that exile he released me, but him he stripped of the title Caesar just before he murdered him."⁸ However, as Julian also noted, in his later years Constantius II was "stung by remorse"⁹: his failure to produce a male heir to the throne and his lack of success in his foreign campaigns against the Sasanian Persians on Rome's eastern frontier were, according to the gossip at court, to be explained by his earlier deeds.

This "dark side" of the Constantinian dynasty has tended to take precedence in attempts to write a history of the period following Constantine's reign and before Julian's—a period cast into shadow by these colossal historical figures. Repeating the words of Gibbon, it was an episode "big with danger and mischief", and much of its appeal lies in its potential to reaffirm the perception that Roman imperial politics was a deeply murky,

⁵ See, for instance, Tougher 2012: 182–184, 186.

⁶ See Humphries 2012.

⁷ Lib., *Or.* 18.10.

⁸ Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 270d.

⁹ Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 271a.

not to say murderous, affair. However, recent studies on the immediate succession of Constantine's three sons by Fausta, his second wife, have taken a more sober direction,¹⁰ and studies on ancestral rule in the Roman Empire¹¹ and comparative analyses of dynasties¹² have explored the workings of the process of dynastic succession in more objective terms. As one of the foremost scholars on dynasties has observed on the matter of succession: "A potential for conflict was always present, particularly among the males at the heart of any dynasty. Dynastic power carried within itself a permanent invitation to violence."¹³

In a study of the years 337–361, dynasty clearly matters. However, the focus on the dramatic events arising from the efforts of Constantine's sons to concentrate power in their hands alone—the prime mover was incontestably Constantius II¹⁴—has overshadowed attempts to develop a clear-sighted appreciation of the significance of the years between the reigns of Constantine I and Julian for the study of the later Roman Empire. The original ambition of the project that has resulted in this volume was to scrutinise these years more carefully, in order to evaluate with greater cogency their contribution to the political, administrative and cultural dynamics of the empire in the fourth century. This volume has taken inspiration from the industry of many scholars working on the Roman Empire of the fourth century in the period after Constantine's death. These include the noteworthy Fondation Hardt *Entretiens* volume from 1989, entitled *L'église et l'empire au IV^e siècle* and edited by Albrecht Dihle (although its focus is largely on Constantius II's reign as Augustus, as noted by the reviewers of the volume¹⁵). The contributions in this volume assessed a range of themes, including Constantine's dynastic arrangements (Friedrich Vittinghoff¹⁶), the activities of the church in the time of Constantius II (William Frend¹⁷), the imperial style and ecclesiastical policies of Constantius II (a near-monograph length article by Charles Pietri¹⁸), the social and economic impact of Constantius II's reign (Lellia

¹⁰ Burgess 2008.

¹¹ Hekster 2015.

¹² Duindam 2016.

¹³ Duindam 2016: 88.

¹⁴ See esp. Burgess 2008.

¹⁵ For example, McLynn 1990.

¹⁶ Vittinghoff 1989.

¹⁷ Frend 1989.

¹⁸ Pietri 1989.

Cracco Ruggini¹⁹) and the relationship between Christians and pagans during Constantius' time (Timothy Barnes²⁰). The overall contribution of the Dihle volume lies in its recognition that the period after Constantine's death is sufficiently important to warrant its own treatment separate from Constantine and Julian. The focus on Constantius II in Dihle's volume is understandable because he was the longest serving Augustus of Constantine's sons—having avoided the fate of both his brothers who died in civil wars—and because of the role he took in the debates and direction of the Christian church in the mid-fourth century. In terms of the modern study of Constantius II, Richard Klein's 1977 monograph *Constantius II. und die christliche kirche* established the parameters for the possibility of Constantius II's rehabilitation and his engagement with ecclesiastical affairs of the 340s and 350s. The work of Hanns Christof Brennecke from 1984 built on and expanded the lines of inquiry established by Klein in the previous decade.²¹ Concerning matters of law and secular administration, Chantal Vogler's 1979 study *Constance II et l'administration imperiale* proved to be path-breaking in its presentation of Constantius as an active legislator and reformer of the empire. A compact volume by Mary Michaels Mudd from 1989 offered a selection of insightful essays on the activities of Constantius' government.²² A detailed conspectus of the laws of the sons of Constantine was published by Paola Ombretta Cuneo in 1997 (*La legislazione di Costantino II, Costanzo II e Costante (337–361)*).²³ Discussion of Constantius' interest in the theological debates of the mid-fourth century and his policies towards the episcopate have been reinvigorated in recent years by the work of Timothy Barnes,²⁴ Steffen Diefenbach²⁵ and Walt Stevenson.²⁶ Pedro Barceló's monograph on Constantius II from 2004 offered a survey of historical research on the emperor, with a focus on his relationship to the Christian church.²⁷ Responses to the public image and policies of Constantius II with regard to his involvement in the church have been discussed in

¹⁹Cracco Ruggini 1989.

²⁰Barnes 1989.

²¹Brennecke 1984.

²²Mudd 1989. See Drinkwater 1991 for a review.

²³Cuneo 1997.

²⁴Barnes 1993.

²⁵Diefenbach 2012, 2015.

²⁶Stevenson 2014.

²⁷Barceló 2004, with the subtitle, *Die Anfänge des Staatskirchentums*.

publications by Mark Humphries²⁸ and Richard Flower.²⁹ Largely as a result of the industrious activities of the Dutch project on Ammianus Marcellinus, the literary portrayal of Constantius II in the context of a pro-Julianic history is now better understood than ever before.³⁰ In addition to the series of commentaries on the books of Ammianus by the Dutch team of scholars, insightful pieces on the portrait of Constantius II in Ammianus have been produced by Hans Teitler³¹ (himself a member of the Dutch Ammianus group), Timothy Barnes³² and Gavin Kelly.³³

Greater attention has been paid more recently to the imperial ideologies and institutional influence of the Constantinian dynasty. The ancestral construction of Constantine's family and its promotion across a wide variety of media (coins, inscriptions, art, literature and poetry) has been explored in monographs by François Chausson³⁴ and Olivier Hekster,³⁵ and in a number of articles by Johannes Wienand.³⁶ The internal tensions within the Constantinian dynasty—the clash between the sons of Fausta and Constantine and the offspring of Theodora and Constantius I—have been analysed in articles by Richard Burgess,³⁷ David Woods³⁸ and Moyses Marcos.³⁹ Constantius' engagement with the intellectual elites of the period was explored in detail by John Vanderspoel's monograph on Themistius, the Constantinopolitan rhetor, philosopher and senator.⁴⁰ Continuing this important topic, the considerable (but hitherto neglected) impact of Constantius II on the literature, culture and built environment of the empire in the fourth century forms the basis for a series of studies by Nick Henck.⁴¹ Major advances in the rehabilitation of Constantius II's abilities as a military commander and of the conduct of the Persian campaigns during his reign have been made in the studies of both Christopher

²⁸ Humphries 1997, 1998.

²⁹ Flower 2013, 2016.

³⁰ For example on Book 21 of Ammianus, see Den Boeft et al. 1991.

³¹ Teitler 1992.

³² Barnes 1993: 132–138.

³³ Kelly 2005, 2008: 225–230.

³⁴ Chausson 2007.

³⁵ Hekster 2015.

³⁶ Wienand 2012, 2015; Hekster 2015: 225–237.

³⁷ Burgess 2008.

³⁸ Woods 2011.

³⁹ Marcos 2014.

⁴⁰ Vanderspoel 1995: 71–113.

⁴¹ Henck 2001a, 2001b, 2007.

Lightfoot⁴² and Roger Blockley.⁴³ This emperor's reforms of the imperial administration, in particular his management of relations between the senatorial aristocracies of Rome and Constantinople, has lately been analysed by Muriel Moser.⁴⁴ Regarding the civil wars fought during this period, a firmer appreciation of their circumstances and events has been reached in the works of John Drinkwater⁴⁵ and Bruno Bleckmann.⁴⁶ More recently, the brothers of Constantius—Constantine II and Constans—have in turn emerged from his shadow through the labours of *inter alia* Paola Ombretta Cuneo⁴⁷ and George Woudhuysen.⁴⁸ Around the turn of the 1700th anniversary of Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in October 312, and amidst a plethora of scholarship on Constantine's reign,⁴⁹ Pierre Maraval published a monograph on the emperor's sons, *Les fils de Constantin*, which marked an important contribution in efforts to refocus attention on the years after 337.⁵⁰

A number of accessible, historical surveys of the Constantinian dynasty, and the reigns of the sons, have also appeared over the years. Robert Frakes' chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, edited by Noel Lenski, surveyed the Constantinian dynasty down to 363.⁵¹ David Hunt's chapter in volume thirteen of *The Cambridge Ancient History* offers a valuable introduction to the themes and issues of the years 337–361.⁵² Important discussions of the sons and their administrations can also be found in David Potter's *The Roman Empire at Bay AD 180–395*⁵³ and Jill Harries' *Imperial Rome AD 284 to 363*.⁵⁴

A rich and diverse range of sources exist for the study of the period of the sons' reigns—far more than the all-too-dominating voices of Julian and Ammianus Marcellinus, so influential in modern impressions of Constantius II especially. In recent years a greater appreciation of this

⁴² Lightfoot 1981, 1988.

⁴³ Blockley 1989, 1992.

⁴⁴ Moser 2018.

⁴⁵ Drinkwater 1994, 2000.

⁴⁶ Bleckmann 1994, 1999a, 1999b, 2003.

⁴⁷ Cuneo 2012.

⁴⁸ Woudhuysen 2018.

⁴⁹ Cf. Flower 2012.

⁵⁰ Maraval 2013.

⁵¹ Frakes 2006. See also Tougher 2012.

⁵² Hunt 1998.

⁵³ Potter 2004.

⁵⁴ Harries 2012.

range of sources has been facilitated by the publication of several editions and translations of key texts. These include Samuel Lieu's and Dominic Montserrat's volume *From Constantine to Julian*, which contains English translations of, *inter alia*, Libanius' panegyric for Constantius II and Constans (*Oration* 59), and the eighth-century *Artemii passio*, which borrowed extensively from the lost "Arian" (= non-Nicene) church history of Philostorgius.⁵⁵ A new edition and French translation of *Oration* 59 by Pierre-Louis Malosse appeared in 2003.⁵⁶ Important translations and commentaries of other imperial orations from this period also include Ignazio Tantillo's Italian translation and commentary of Julian's *Oration* 1,⁵⁷ and Peter Heather's and David Moncur's English translation of a selection of the orations of Themistius concerned with Constantius II.⁵⁸ An important point of contrast to these panegyrics and the imperial personae advertised in them is supplied by Richard Flower's English translations and commentaries of the invectives of Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari, all composed towards the end of Constantius II's reign.⁵⁹ Moving from epideictic to historiography, Sextus Aurelius Victor's *De Caesaribus* and Eutropius' *Breviarium*, both translated by H.W. Bird, provide important perspectives from the mid-fourth century.⁶⁰ Valuable later Roman and Byzantine histories that in all likelihood drew on fourth-century sources for the reigns of Constantine's sons have also been translated either afresh or anew in recent years.⁶¹ An English translation of books twelve and thirteen of John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories* by Thomas Banchich and Eugene Lane appeared in 2009.⁶² Ronald T. Ridley's English translation of Zosimus' *New History* was republished in 2017. A reconstruction of Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical History* by Philip Amidon appeared in 2007,⁶³ followed in 2013 by a French translation with commentary of the Anomoian historian⁶⁴ by Édouard des Places, Bruno Bleckmann, Doris Meyer and Jean-Marc

⁵⁵ Lieu and Montserrat 1996.

⁵⁶ Malosse 2003.

⁵⁷ Tantillo 1997.

⁵⁸ Heather and Moncur 2001.

⁵⁹ Flower 2016.

⁶⁰ Bird 1993 and 1994.

⁶¹ See Bleckmann 1999b; cf. Al. Cameron 2011: 626–690.

⁶² Banchich and Lane 2009.

⁶³ Amidon 2007.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ferguson 2005: 129–163.

Prieur.⁶⁵ The revision of Hans-Georg Opitz's *Athanasius Werke* conducted by Brennecke, Uta Heil, Annette von Stockhausen et al., has resulted in a number of volumes of interest to students of Constantine's successors.⁶⁶ Also worth noting in the context of textual studies is the website curated by Glen L. Thompson (*Fourth Century Christianity*), which is a treasury of sources and essays relating to the ecclesiastical history of the period.⁶⁷

As noted, the chapters in this volume aim to develop current understandings of the sons' reigns and to assess their influence on aspects of the imperial, administrative, cultural and religious facets of the empire in the fourth century. The volume is arranged into four parts. Part I, entitled "Creating a Dynasty", comprises two chapters whose role in the volume is not only to survey the early years of the sons' reigns but also to reappraise established ideas about the dynasty in its formative guise. Chapter 2 by John Vanderspoel presents a survey of the issues and controversies surrounding the history of the House of Constantine. Vanderspoel provides a narrative *Versuch* detailing Constantine I's emergence from the wreckage of the Tetrarchy and the consolidation of his power, which he realised in part through his efforts to fashion a dynasty, beginning with a number of hybridised collegiate-dynastic arrangements that ended in failure and which included his first-born (and ill-fated) son Crispus from his marriage to Minervina, followed by the dynasty fashioned around the children of the equally doomed Fausta. Constantine's elimination of Fausta in 326, Vanderspoel argues, may have forced the sons' hands in the summer of 337, since their legitimacy could now be called into question as a result of their mother's fate and the memory sanctions applied in the wake of her death. They were left with little choice but to eliminate their rivals to the throne, comprising in the main the male descendants of Constantius I by Theodora, his second wife. However, both Theodora and Helena, who was Constantius I's first wife and Constantine I's mother, were commemorated on coins minted in the early years of the reigns of the three brothers. Vanderspoel examines the complexities of imperial legitimacy that emerged during the sons' reigns, and he surveys the response of the Constantinian emperors to the challenges of rival imperial claimants. Chapter 3 in this part, by William Lewis, reappraises relations between Constantine II and his brothers, specifically the background to the conflict

⁶⁵ Des Places et al. 2013.

⁶⁶ For example Brennecke et al. 2006, 2007.

⁶⁷ <http://www.fourthcentury.com/>. Accessed October 2018.

between Constantine II and Constans in early spring 340 that resulted in the death of the eldest Augustus near Aquileia. Lewis examines the evidence for the workings of the empire's administration following the conference in Pannonia during September 337 when, in the wake of their dramatic paring down of the dynasty, the sons of Constantine met and revised the territorial divisions originally planned by Constantine I during his lifetime.⁶⁸ On the basis of particular legal rulings of the Constantinian monarchs in the early period of the dynasty preserved in the *Theodosian Code* (e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27), Lewis argues that although regional autonomy was very much the daily reality of government under the three Augusti, Constantine II and his court sought to maintain a functional imperial hierarchy with himself as the senior peripatetic figure of authority in the Triarchy. Lewis argues that the received narrative of Constantine II as aggressor in the conflict of April 340 derived from the court of Constans, and was deployed in order to obfuscate what was in effect an act of rebellion by the youngest Augustus against Constantine II's attempt to realise his seniority across the empire.

Part II of the volume is entitled "Representations of Authority". Chapters by Eric R. Varner and Christine Greenlee examine the presentation of Constantine's sons in imperial portraiture and in panegyric respectively. Imperially derived representations of the emperors in art and rhetoric highlight the Augustus, in the words of Peter Stewart, "as an authoritative point of reference towards whom the communities of the empire willingly directed their devotion"⁶⁹ in both texts and images. Chapter 4 by Eric R. Varner examines the portraiture of Constantine and his successors. Varner notes the dual character of Constantinian art, evident in its highly individualised portrayal of the ruler and also in its conscious duplication of images and styles from earlier rulers (notably Augustus and Trajan). The result is "a carefully layered identity for the emperor", similar to Constantine and his dynasty's portrayal in literary works from his reign (principally, the poetry of Optatian). As the sons moved through their Caesarean roles as talismanic figures attending their father on coin legends, their uniformity of appearance as Augusti on solidi has made it very difficult to differentiate between the three of them. By dint of his longevity, Constantius II makes more of a mark in portraiture than his brothers and due consideration is given to his image in statuary

⁶⁸ See the pertinent remarks by Barnes 2011: 162–168.

⁶⁹ Stewart 2008: 112.

and coinage portraiture. Finally, Varner's analysis of the obelisk dedicated by Constantius II (together with the hexametric verse inscription on its base) to mark the emperor's visit to Rome in 357, offers a fresh reading of Constantius' contribution to the monumentality of the capital. Chapter 5 by Christine Greenlee assesses the ideology of unity in panegyrics for the sons from the 340s after the death of Constantine II. The historic importance of unity as a guiding principle in the governance of the empire was maintained during the sons' reigns in spite of the fact that the political and religious circumstances of the day often made it more of a pretence than a political reality. Greenlee reads the "strong promotion" in Themistius' *Oration* 1 of Constantius as sole ruler in the context of his feud with Constans during the first half of the decade. Improvement in the relations between the two brothers *c.* 346 is in evidence in Libanius' *Oration* 59, a *basilikos logos* delivered for both rulers (albeit in Nicomedia, where knowledge of details about Constans would have been hazy at best). The portrayal of the brothers' relationship is evidently idealised and, by extension, the unified empire over which they are presented as ruling by Libanius. Greenlee's analysis of this important text draws out "the new ideology" propagated by both rulers towards the close of the decade.

The two other chapters in "Representations of Authority" consider the flip-side of the portrayal of imperial power by examining pejorative presentations of the sons in literature, especially historiography. Chapter 6 by Mark Humphries examines the role of civil war memories in the legitimisation of Constantius II's reign. Humphries' chapter focuses on Constantius' initial defeat of Magnentius at the Battle of Mursa in September 351. As Humphries illustrates, Magnentius' usurpation of Constans' territory in the first third of the year 350 and the series of damaging campaigns conducted by Constantius that followed placed an enormous strain both on the resources of the state and on the loyalties of the populace, not least those of the senatorial class in Rome. Constantius' initial defeat of Magnentius was thus a costly war in many ways, and yet it was celebrated in a variety of pro-Constantinian sources as a victory over tyranny. These legitimising war memories were, however, soon eclipsed by reactions against Constantius in a number of pro-Julianic sources, notably in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. The condemnation of Constantius II as victor in wars against other Romans, achieved at the expense of meaningful success in foreign campaigns, thus entered the historical record as one of the primary ways of evaluating Constantius' legacy. The final chapter (Chap. 7) in the part, by Shaun Tougher, examines two aspects of the

courts of Constantine's sons: the roles of eunuchs and imperial women. Beginning with the pejorative treatment of the place of eunuchs and women in Constantius II's regime in the works of Claudius Mamertinus, Eutropius and Ammianus Marcellinus, Tougher highlights that negative judgements about court eunuchs and imperial women formed part of a wider criticism of Constantius' court in pro-Julianic sources. Tougher's analysis unpicks these judgements and considers specific roles taken by these figures in the courts of Constantine's sons. The chapter explores areas of continuity and difference between the attitudes of the sons to court eunuchs and imperial women and those of their father during his reign. Tougher investigates in particular the roles occupied in the Constantinian family by imperial women—as wives, sisters, mothers, grandmothers and aunts—and argues, against the prevailing wisdom, that Constantinian women did have political significance, which is especially clear when they are considered as a group.

The notion that Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans received the empire as patrimony from their father in a seamless transfer⁷⁰ was an important aspect of how the sons' territorial decisions were promoted to a wider audience following their meeting in Pannonia in autumn 337.⁷¹ The emergence later of the idea that the division had been inequitable supplied the explanation for the cause of the civil war between Constantine II and Constans,⁷² and was also—curiously—utilised in the promotion of Constantius II's imperial image as a magnanimous and wise philosopher-ruler who willingly accepted a lesser share of the empire than his brothers.⁷³ However, the reality of the divided empire under Constantine I's successors was far less dramatic. The sons and their administrations demonstrated a hard-nosed pragmatism regarding the restructured empire, as witnessed by their response to the deepening regionalism brought about by a range of internal and external factors. Their initiatives in turn left an indelible mark on the shape and functioning of the empire for the remainder of the late antique period. Part III, "Administration and Governance", addresses these issues. Chapter 8 by Caillan Davenport analyses the evolving regionalism of the Roman Empire under the sons. In particular, Davenport examines the enhanced role of Praetorian Prefects in the

⁷⁰ Exemplified by Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.51.1.

⁷¹ Julian., *Or.* 1.19a.

⁷² See the discussion in this volume by William Lewis.

⁷³ Julian., *Or.* 1.19b–c; Them., *Or.* 2.38d.

restructured empire. The chapter also considers the representation and operation of collegiate government: it highlights those instances when the brothers' administrations worked in unison and discusses those occasions when they did not. Furthermore, Davenport analyses the ways in which the regionalism of the empire affected the careers of senior imperial officials serving under the sons of Constantine. Chapter 9 by Daniëlle Slootjes examines the configuration of the empire's administration under the sons. Slootjes sets the scene by discussing both Diocletian's and Constantine's reforms to the provincial structures of the empire. Her chapter then discusses Constantine's dynastic settlement of 335, which the sons overturned in the coup of 337. Slootjes sifts through the disparate evidence for the division of territory by the sons in order to arrive at a better understanding of the sons' possessions in the early years of their reigns. The chapter also analyses the sons' impact on matters of legal administration and concludes with a conspectus of the careers of governors and *vicarii* during the sons' reigns. Chapter 10 by Meaghan McEvoy examines the sons' relationships with individual cities across the empire. McEvoy discusses the sons' early imperial residences and itineraries, before analysing examples of their civic patronage in relation to civic and ecclesiastical building projects. Additional consideration is also given to the longer-term imperial presence through the modification and building of mausolea for members of the imperial family. McEvoy's chapter concludes with a discussion of Constantius II's focus on Rome and Constantinople in the latter years of his reign. Michael Kulikowski in Chap. 11 picks up on one of the drivers of regionalism by analysing the sons' handling of external threats to the empire's frontiers. Kulikowski regards both the unfinished business of Constantine's foreign affairs and the implosion of concerted government in the wake of the Pannonian settlement of 337 as underpinning the problems faced by the sons regarding the management of the empire's borders. Kulikowski surveys the sons' engagement with the empire's key foreign allies and enemies. Beginning with the perennial problem of Persian dominance in west Asia that proved very costly for Constantius II, the chapter proceeds to analyse the situation in the Balkans, Gaul and the West. Kulikowski argues that the Magnentian revolt had a long-term and damaging effect on the integrity of the empire: to all intents and purposes, the Gallic frontier was never again fully under imperial control, and this, he argues, was the single greatest legacy of Constantine I's successors to the Western Roman Empire. The final chapter (Chap. 12) in this part on administration, by Peter Sarris, considers the economy of the

empire in the mid-fourth century. Sarris begins by reviewing recent scholarship on the topic and suggests a more responsible approach to understanding the social consequences of the period's economic monetisation. He then proceeds to argue that the reign of Constantius II was characterised by an acceleration of gold-based fiscalism that furthered the interests of the empire's new service elite not just in the newly established city of Constantinople but also in the provinces where they built up sizeable property portfolios. Sarris concludes by discussing Constantius' policy with regard to the ownership of estates and the role of the central government in enriching the new service elites via a policy of centralised redistribution of land through "crown estates".

The final two chapters of the collection in Part IV examine the topics of religion and culture. The former has traditionally been the principal focus for scholars of the sons' reigns, largely as a result of the importance of the 340s and 350s to the history of the Christian church.⁷⁴ More recent research, however, has moved beyond creeds and councils to reappraise the cultural, rhetorical and educational contribution of these decades to the history of the empire. Critical understanding of the impact of the period's religious transformations—not solely, it should be said confined to Christianity—on late Roman government, social relations, rhetoric and culture has continued to develop apace.⁷⁵ The contributions of Nicholas Baker-Brian and Jan Stenger analyse some of the effects that the reigns of Constantine's sons had on the religious landscape of the fourth century. Chapter 13 by Baker-Brian analyses the extension of an epistolary culture from the time of Constantine I's engagement with the Christian church into the period of the son's reigns, with a special focus on the role that imperial and synodal letters played in shaping the theological narratives of the 350s. Baker-Brian's chapter discusses the seeming preoccupation with imperial letters in the writings of the period's Nicene authors by considering some reasons for the super-charged "epistolarity" of the works of *inter alia* Athanasius of Alexandria and Hilary of Poitiers. A corollary of this analysis is a discussion of the important role that imperial letters played in enunciating the emperor's legal rulings on, for example, the exile and recall of key clerics, a theme now identified as central to the political landscape of the mid-fourth century. Rather than dismissing imperial letters in the manner of old, as examples of imperial "bluster", the chapter argues

⁷⁴ See the important study by Parvis 2006.

⁷⁵ For instance, Brown 1992; Dillon 2012; Elm 2012; Flower 2013.

that these texts played a formative role in shaping both the parameters of religious rhetoric and the theological debates in the time of Constantine's successors. Turning from the affairs of the Christian church, Chap. 14 by Jan Stenger revisits prior assumptions about the condition of pagans and paganism in the sons' territories. Stenger's contribution reiterates the necessity for careful consideration of primary sources relating to imperial attitudes to pagan practices, as evidenced in the laws issued by the sons that are preserved in redacted forms in collections from a later period (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.2; 16.10.3; 16.10.4; 16.10.5; 16.10.6; 9.16.4), and in the works composed by pagan intellectuals (e.g., Firmicus Maternus prior to his conversion, Libanius, Themistius and Eunapius) which in many instances served to substantiate their own identity as members of an educated elite. Stenger analyses the legislation of Constans and Constantius II aimed at criminalising pagan practices, and he argues that their laws targeting sacrifice hardly amounted to a concerted strategy to eradicate paganism across the empire. Stenger concludes that the image of pagan beliefs and practices in the writings of the educated pagan elite portray a more cohesive religious identity than was present in reality, and which was determined in large part by the challenge that Christianity presented to late antique polytheism.

The influence of the historiographical portrayals of Constantine I and Julian, and their reception by scholars, has meant that the reigns of Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans have resided in a hinterland of the historical imagination for a considerable period. The historiographical shadows cast by the figures of Constantine and Julian have not only impeded a better understanding of the reigns of Constantine's sons but also prevented a fuller appreciation of Constantine's own imperial legacy and the immediate context for the decisions taken by Julian during his reign. It is hoped that the chapters in this volume will not only illuminate the twenty-four years between these two imperial giants but also provide a better understanding for the events of the fourth century *in toto*.

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PART I

Creating a Dynasty



CHAPTER 2

From the Tetrarchy to the Constantinian Dynasty: A Narrative Introduction

John Vanderspoel

This chapter is designed to offer a narrative introduction to the dynasty established by Constantius I and to provide the historical background to this collection of essays on the sons of Constantine. Naturally, it cannot, and therefore does not, address every aspect of the period in detail, nor does it regularly engage in detailed academic argument. Instead, it is a survey that necessarily offers some interpretations as it navigates the controversies that attend almost every aspect of the dynasty's history.

The premature death of the emperor Numerian in 284 resulted in Diocletian being chosen and acclaimed by the army council and the soldiers at Nicomedia on 20 November 284. The subsequent killing of the emperor Carinus in 285 left Diocletian as the sole legitimate ruler of the Roman world. It was a role he soon shared with others, as he developed

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J. Vanderspoel (✉)

Department of Classics and Religion, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada
e-mail: vandersp@ucalgary.ca

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the Tetrarchy, a system whereby four rulers administered four regions of the empire, while remaining in theory a single imperial entity as a college. Diocletian's division of the empire into regions long survived his Tetrarchy. It lies behind the persistent presence of regional Caesars under Constantine, behind the regional prefectures that appear throughout the fourth century, behind the desire of soldiers and inhabitants for multiple emperors, and, one may argue,¹ behind the division of the Roman world into two distinct empires, East and West, in 395, with a prelude in 365, when Valentinian and Valens divided the empire and military resources between themselves. Diocletian's development of regional rule occurred in two stages. In the first, he appointed Maximian as Caesar on 21 July 285,² and delegated the new Caesar to take on the Bagaudae in Gaul. Some months later, probably on 1 April 286, Maximian was given the rank of Augustus, as an equal but junior co-emperor, and given the task of administering the West while Diocletian was to administer the East. The second stage involved the addition of two new men in incremental positions. Each Augustus received a junior emperor, a Caesar, to assist them in their respective regions, which were each divided, for administrative purposes, into two: the Caesar was to administer one, the Augustus the other. The empire was governed by an imperial college of four, while the four regions were individually administered by a single emperor. The two men who became Caesars on 1 March 293 were Galerius in the East and Constantius in the West. Constantius certainly, and probably Galerius, appear to have been high-ranking generals before their promotions.³ Similarly, both were married to daughters of their emperors. Constantius had already given up Helena, mother of his son Constantine, in favour of Maximian's daughter Theodora, with whom he had half a dozen children.⁴ Galerius married Valeria, daughter of Diocletian. She is said to have adopted Candidianus (born *c.* 296), Galerius' son by a concubine, because of her sterility (Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 50.2); that raises the question of Galerius'

¹ Vanderspoel 2012: 238–240.

² I follow the dates in Barnes 1982.

³ See Barnes 2011: 40–41, revising his earlier view in Barnes 1982: 33–35, 125–126, that they had been Praetorian Prefects. A recently discovered inscription (*AE* 1987.456) lists only a pair of prefects in 296, indicating that Diocletian maintained the practice of appointing only two prefects for the empire; since Julius Asclepiodotus was the western prefect from 292 to at least 296, Constantius was not selected as Caesar from a prefecture under Maximian. See Porena 2003: 133–151, for discussion.

⁴ Against the view that she was Maximian's step-daughter, see Barnes 1982: 33.

daughter Valeria Maximilla, who married Maxentius, son of Maximian: was her mother a previous wife of Galerius or was Valeria's sterility confined to an inability to produce male progeny? The tendency is to regard her as the daughter of a previous wife,⁵ thereby linking the marriage to Valeria with his promotion to the rank of Caesar. Even if Galerius married Valeria earlier, Maximilla might nevertheless be a daughter by an earlier union.⁶

Diocletian eventually abdicated on 1 May 305 and forced Maximian to do the same.⁷ Constantius and Galerius were promoted to the rank of Augustus, and two new Caesars were chosen, Severus in the West and Maximinus in the East. There was no preference for filial succession, though Maximinus was a nephew whom Galerius had adopted. Constantine, son of the new Augustus Constantius, was not promoted.⁸ Maxentius, son of the abdicating Maximian and son-in-law of Galerius, was also passed over. The choices made by Diocletian in both 293 and 305 made statements about the principle of heredity as an avenue to the throne: it was no longer to be a primary criterion for the selection of new members of the imperial college. Rather, competence, experience (often rewarded by marriage alliances) and association by marriage alliances⁹ were to be given the greatest consideration¹⁰; if there had once been a plan to promote Constantine and Maxentius,¹¹ Diocletian subsequently changed his mind on the advisability of hereditary succession, influenced,

⁵ See, for example, Donciu 2012: 48. Valeria Maximilla was born before 293, since she married Maxentius in time to produce a son, Valerius Romulus, who was consul in 308 and 309 and identified at that time as *nobilissimus vir* (ILS 672) not *puer*. Of course, *vir* may be generous; even so, Valeria Maximilla must have reached puberty by the late 290s. An earlier wife solves the problems raised by the events of Maximilla's life and eliminates any suspicion that Valeria was not completely sterile. Valeria Maximilla probably married Maxentius c. 298–300; see Barnes 2011: 48; Donciu 2012: 48.

⁶ The marriage is often presumed to date to 293, but see Leadbetter 2009: 61, for an argument in favour of 289.

⁷ Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 18–19, ascribes the motivation almost entirely to Galerius. See Barnes 1981: 25–27. Leadbetter 2009: 137–138, suggests that Diocletian orchestrated events.

⁸ *De mort. pers.* 19.

⁹ Barnes 2011: 48.

¹⁰ Though the promotion of Maximinus Daia might seem to argue against this. See Leadbetter 2009: 143–145, for a suggestion that Galerius' access to Diocletian helped him to supersede Constantius by arranging for the appointment of his nephew and his friend Severus.

¹¹ As Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 18.8–11, suggests.

perhaps, by the wishes of Galerius,¹² who might naturally want to prevent a Tetrarchy where three of four members were related to each other: Constantius and Maxentius were already brothers-in-law, while Constantine was the son of Constantius (and was soon to become Maxentius' brother-in-law).

The whole process became something of a mess in the summer of 306,¹³ when Constantius died at York. The principle established by the abdication would suggest that Severus (or Maximinus) should be the new Augustus and that a new Caesar should be chosen from competent and experienced candidates (who might include Constantine and Maxentius). Severus was indeed named the new Augustus; so too was Constantine, who had been with his father at York, though only by himself and his troops. Constantine did accept Galerius' offer to be the new Caesar, but did not reduce his claims accordingly in the West. Instead, he soon accepted an official investiture as Augustus and a wife, Fausta the daughter of Maximian, in early autumn of 307. Maximian had by then been given a position as Augustus once again, by his son Maxentius, who had assumed imperial power on 28 October 306 in Italy, Africa and the islands between. In spring 307, father and son defeated Severus who abdicated but was nevertheless regarded in the East as Augustus of the West until his death, probably in mid-September 307, at the hands of Maxentius.¹⁴

Maxentius had seen no reason not to pursue his own hereditary claims, once Constantine had acted on his, though he did initially avoid the use of the imperial titles, in the hope of winning Galerius' favour.¹⁵ That did not happen; instead Galerius, who stopped regarding Constantine as legitimate in any way in summer 307, invaded Italy in September of the same year in the effort to stabilize the situation, but he was driven back. A few months later, in April 308, Maximian attempted to depose his own son. Unsuccessful, he fled to Constantine in Gaul. Meanwhile in the East Maximinus avoided the temptation to aggrandize his own claims, at least in terms of official titles. In autumn 308, Diocletian summoned a conference at Carnuntum to discuss the situation. The outcome was the

¹² According to Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 18.11, Galerius felt that Maxentius despised him and that Constantine would not obey him.

¹³ Rees 2004: 80: "As a constitutional experiment, it flopped; and if it was designed as an attempt to prevent crises of succession, it was a disaster."

¹⁴ The chronological details in this and the next paragraphs derive from Barnes 1982: 3–16.

¹⁵ Rees 2004: 83–85, points out that Maxentius may have been deliberately anti-Tetrarchic, with thoughts of restoring a more traditional imperial government.

appointment of Licinius as Augustus, presumably of the West, since Maxentius was not, indeed was never, recognized as legitimate by any ruler other than himself and, sometimes, his father. Licinius never established himself in the West. Maximian was forced to abdicate again, and returned to Constantine in Gaul. Maximinus and Constantine were recognized as Caesars, though Constantine never claimed anything below full status as Augustus in the West; the following year, perhaps to forestall a similar claim by Maximinus, they were named *fili Augustorum*, partly to put “Augustus” in their official nomenclature, partly to mark them out as the next Augusti. Constantine ignored this diminution, and in 310 Maximinus also began to use the title Augustus. At that point, the imperial college consisted of four more or less legitimate Augusti. Maxentius, too, was employing the title, as was Maximian; when the latter learned that Constantine was marching against him, he fled to Massilia, but the citizens opened the gates to the pursuing forces. In one version of what followed, Maximian committed suicide at that point. In another, he was forced or encouraged to commit suicide in the summer of 310, after charges that he had attempted to murder Constantine in his bed.¹⁶ Whether the charges were true or false is somewhat immaterial: Constantine had had enough of his father-in-law’s shenanigans, and he needed solid propaganda to remove an older and more experienced rival, before opposing his brother-in-law Maxentius as well. Once Maxentius was gone, Constantine saw the benefit of re-claiming ties to Maximian and designated as *divus* the man whom he had forced to acquire the title’s primary prerequisite.

After a brief period spent consolidating his support in Gaul, Constantine headed into Italy to challenge Maxentius. On that journey, he recalibrated his relationship with the divine, in a quest to secure a supreme patron. Of necessity, Constantine sought a deity superior to the patron deities of his rivals; in essence, he needed a god outside the traditional pantheon, since Zeus/Jupiter, whose patronage Galerius had inherited from Diocletian, could dictate the allegiances of his underlings. Few choices were available. The Jewish god was too limited to an ethnic identity, and Mithras, though popular in the army, was too easy to link to Rome’s enemy Persia. Various

¹⁶See Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 29–30. At *Pnn. Lat.* 6 (7) 20.3, Maximian is said to have committed suicide immediately after his failed attempt to regain the throne. Barnes 2011: 72–74, shows that the second story appeared after Maxentius accused Constantine of murdering Maximian, now called *divus* by a son who suddenly adored the very father who had attempted to depose him not long before.

foreign male gods were equated to Zeus/Jupiter or, if solar, to Apollo and, in any case, were not universal enough to be useful to Constantine. In the end, Constantine adopted the Christian god as his patron, supplementing a close relationship with Apollo in the process.¹⁷ Christianity was an empire-wide religion, with numerous adherents at all levels of society.¹⁸ Most likely, Constantine was far less interested in the number of Christians who might support him than in the potential power of the Christian deity against the divine support brought to bear by his rivals.¹⁹ By the time of the battle at the Milvian bridge on 28 October 312, Constantine's standard bearers had replaced the traditional images with Christian symbols. There was no dream during the previous night, no sign of the cross in the noon-day sky.²⁰ Among other things, it would have been impossible to change the standards in time; moreover, any propaganda related to Constantine's adoption of a new patron required time to generate useful support by presenting him as a ruler with a novel outlook, one that might appeal to more than just the Christians in the city, since it presented any detractors of Maxentius with an alternative.

Constantine prevailed in the battle at the Milvian bridge, and Maxentius joined his father in the afterlife. Like his father a few years previously, he was saddled with a decree of *damnatio memoriae*; unlike his father, he was never rehabilitated as *divus*. Not too much later, the Senate honoured Constantine with an inscription on his arch that proclaimed his success "*instinctu divinitatis*", a phrase that has generated its fair share of controversy. Though emperors typically did not attempt to control freedom of

¹⁷ Constantine developed a relationship with Apollo while in Gaul, on the basis of a vision, according to *Pan Lat.* 6 (7) 21.4. Weiss 1993 argued that Constantine and his men saw a solar halo, which they interpreted as a sign from Apollo, and which Constantine later reinterpreted as a symbol from the Christian God. I have had access only to the English translation with revisions and additions of Weiss' article, by Birley 2003. For a discussion of the argument and of scholarly reaction to it (more positive of late), see Barnes 2011: 74–80.

¹⁸ There is no point in attempting to offer specifics or statistics; the requisite data is not available. On the other hand, it is clear that in many places Christians were a significant minority and that Christians could be found everywhere, even in the Senate at Rome. On the latter point, see Champlin 1982: 70–76; Barnes and Westall 1991: 50–61; Barnes 1995: 135–147.

¹⁹ Barnes 2011: 80.

²⁰ Rather, these were devised to explain: Constantine's adoption of the Christian God was so outlandishly unthinkable that only divine intervention could explain it, just as when Caesar crossed the Rubicon and Saul (Paul) became a Christian.

expression or interfere in panegyric and other public rhetoric,²¹ except in cases of real or imagined treason, orators knew what was acceptable and generally stayed within suitable limits, even when they outlined their expectations about imperial policy and behaviour.²² The Senate, on the other hand, was a significant element of the imperial government that had long displayed a general reluctance to exercise any initiative that opposed or even challenged emperors. On that basis, it is likely that Constantine approved a draft of the inscription in advance of its public unveiling; the phrase is much less likely to represent the caution of a Senate unwilling to offend the religious sensibilities of the new emperor but not ready to accept his beliefs than the wishes of the emperor himself.²³ If so, Constantine was unwilling either to offend traditional sensibilities or not yet able to proclaim his acceptance of Christian monotheism as his exclusive religious perspective. The latter seems more likely; any person predisposed to accept a multiplicity of deities, even if the scheme included a supreme deity,²⁴ could not in religious terms object in principle to the inclusion of an additional god. Since he was not previously a monotheistic Christian, Constantine may have hoped to remain a polytheist who might employ the Christian deity as his preferred patron without giving up his acceptance of other religious beings.²⁵ Constantine was taking full advantage of Galerius' deathbed declaration that ended the Diocletianic persecution and legitimized Christianity.²⁶ It is too often forgotten that

²¹ See also the chapter by Christine Greenlee in this volume.

²² For panegyric during the Tetrarchy see Rees 2002.

²³ Like others before him, Van Dam 2011: 129–140, credits the design of the arch and its inscription to senators and architects. That cannot be, not in the autocratic, image-conscious environment of the late Roman dominate. While architects and others may have submitted a series of drawings and discussed various points, no inscription was carved, no panel was stolen from another monument without Constantine's prior approval.

²⁴ From that point of view, there was never any such thing as pagan monotheism: every supreme deity resided at the top of a hierarchy or was at least multi-faceted. See Edwards 2012: 141: “[S]trict monotheism—the choice of a single god to the exclusion of all others—was a rarity, but it was common style in magic, prayer and literature to adopt a single patron who subsumed the deities of many lands”.

²⁵ To put this a different way, only those who were already Christian could not countenance a perspective that included Christianity and other religions. Polytheists could add Christianity to their Mithraism, to their adherence to Sol Invictus, etc., without generating internal religious conflict.

²⁶ Barnes 1981: 39, notes that Galerius' declaration ought not to be over-estimated. But it ought not to be under-estimated either, if only because of the opportunity given to, and accepted by, Constantine.

Constantine was not the first emperor to declare that Christianity was a valid religion in the Roman empire²⁷; he was merely the first emperor to espouse the religion openly. A year and a half before the battle of the Milvian bridge, Galerius came to the realization that the Diocletianic persecution had not achieved the desired result of forcing all the inhabitants of the empire to pray to the same set of gods for the health and welfare of the state and its rulers. He therefore declared that it was better for all inhabitants to pray to their own gods than for some not to pray at all for the state's wellbeing.²⁸ Naturally, the impact was felt most strongly by Christians, but in effect Galerius proclaimed religious freedom for every religious group that had been previously regarded as subversive. By promoting his acceptance of Christianity without giving up other religious adherences, Constantine could ensure that a wider array of the inhabitants of the empire might pray on his behalf as a co-religionist. A further benefit was the possibility of retaining much of the ideology of the empire and its deities.

In other ways Constantine did advance the cause of Christianity after his victory over Maxentius.²⁹ Among other things, he granted funds for the construction of churches and perhaps already for the copying of the Christian scriptures. More importantly, he and his co-emperor Licinius who became his brother-in-law as well, agreed in March 313 on a governmental programme errantly known as the "Edict of Milan".³⁰ The document is a natural consequence of Galerius' legitimation of Christianity and the granting of tolerance to all religions; it restates that position, but its main impetus is an acknowledgement that the state had been wrong to persecute Christians. In effect, it is an official apology for the behaviour of a previous regime and outlined measures to restore to Christians and Christianity the property that had been taken from them, to the point of using state funds to compensate current owners of that property. It is the

²⁷ See, for example, Drake 2012: 132, who states that the Edict of Milan legalized Christianity.

²⁸ The document is quoted at *De mort. pers.* 34.

²⁹ Barnes 1981: 48–53.

³⁰ Licinius promulgated the document at Nicomedia after driving Maximinus Daia out of the city in the spring of 313; see below. Lenski 2017 outlines a view of the document that argues derivation from an edict composed by Constantine on the principles outlined by Lactantius, in contrast to earlier views that generally regarded the document as not an edict at all, composed mainly by Licinius and with a limited geographical scope.

sort of thing that governments occasionally do.³¹ The composition of the document did not require an emperor who was Christian, merely one who was willing to see that Christians and Christianity had been wronged and to act to rectify the wrongs. Though it is clear that Constantine became a monotheistic Christian by the time that he defeated Licinius in 324, the transformation was seemingly a process, not a single act,³² perhaps encouraged by bishops who could paint him into a corner by pointing out that he owed to the divine patron who had helped him in 312 the exclusivity of worship that the god demanded.³³

The elimination of Maxentius made Constantine master of the West, while the death of Galerius left Licinius and Maximinus as the other Augusti, with no Caesars to be found anywhere. Officially, Licinius was Augustus of the West, but though he controlled some territory that traditionally belonged to the West, Maximian, Maxentius and Constantine prevented him from ever claiming the West. He had come to terms with Maximinus after the death of Galerius, agreeing to share the East between them, though in April 313 Maximinus crossed the Bosphorus, besieged and captured Byzantium and moved westwards to take Heraclea. On 30 April near Hadrianople, after allegedly receiving in a vision a multi-cultic prayer that he recited to his soldiers,³⁴ Licinius defeated the forces of Maximinus, who fled first to Nicomedia, then unsuccessfully attempted to hold the Cilician Gates against his opponent. Still under pressure from Licinius, in the summer of 313 Maximinus died at Tarsus. For the next few years, both

³¹ For example, governments of both Canada and the United States have issued formal apologies, accompanied by (inadequate) monetary compensation, for the treatment of Canadian and American citizens of Japanese descent during the Second World War.

³² Centuries of a Christianity-based western system of education have imposed a view of proper Christian belief, practice and behaviour that were not necessarily yet in vogue in the early fourth century. It is far more productive to consider the contemporary possibilities available to Constantine, particularly as an emperor, but also as a polytheist by background.

³³ The preceding paragraphs treat matters that have generated much controversy in the works of far too many scholars to cite here. My conclusions are those that I have developed in the course of many years. I have presented some of them at conferences and colloquia and in the classroom, but not in print until now, and it is not my brief here to examine these points in detail. I am grateful to all who commented at various points, and I acknowledge the role of the studies on all sides of the issues in the formation of my views.

³⁴ Perhaps he learned of the efficacy of a multi-cultic approach from Constantine or from his new bride. In any case, Licinius' appeal to a full variety of religious groups seems to reflect the approach of Constantine as interpreted here, an approach that may well have been the imperial doctrine of the day generated by Galerius' deathbed declaration.

remaining emperors dealt with problems at their frontiers: Constantine mainly on the Rhine frontier and Licinius mainly on the Danube. Inevitably, they kept a careful eye on each other. Almost certainly before the birth of Licinius' son in 315, Constantine requested Licinius' approval for the appointment as Caesar in Italy of Bassianus, who was married to Anastasia, a half-sister of Constantine and sister of Licinius' wife Constantia. According to the *Anonymus Valesianus* (5.14–15), Bassianus' brother Senecio, a confidant of Licinius, encouraged him to revolt against Constantine. When the plot was discovered, Constantine ordered the execution of Bassianus and requested the extradition of Senecio.³⁵ Licinius' refusal to do so generated sufficient disharmony to result in an engagement at Cibalae in Pannonia on 8 October 316.³⁶ This is probably a fabrication generated by Constantine's propaganda to explain his abandonment of Bassianus; the real reason was that on 7 August 316 Fausta gave birth to a son, Constantine II.³⁷ Constantine celebrated the birth by invading his colleague's territory and winning at Cibalae. Subsequently, he continued to move eastward, and by December 316 he had reached Serdica; not long thereafter, he and Licinius battled at the Campus Ardiensis. Constantine won; Licinius handed over some territory, retaining only Thrace west of the Bosporus, and agreed to the dethroning of Valens, whom he had made a colleague not long before the battle.³⁸

Though defeated twice in the space of a few months, Licinius was able to retain his throne. Whether Constantine was mollified by pleas from his half-sister is unknown; it is equally possible that he had not yet decided to take control of the entire empire and that he was still willing to respect a

³⁵ Nothing is known of Anastasia's fate; according to Amm. Marc. 26.6.14, some baths at Constantinople were named after her. Perhaps, but since other baths were named after the later emperor Valens' daughter Carosa who had a sister named Anastasia, it is at least possible that Valens named or renamed both baths after his daughters. Chausson 2007: 138–141, conjectures that the daughter of Gallus and Constantina was also called Anastasia.

³⁶ On the dates, I follow Barnes 1981: 66–67. Barnes suggests that Licinius refused a suggestion that Bassianus be made Caesar in Italy and that Constantine's son Crispus be named Caesar in the East. The sources do not mention Crispus in this context, but given his appointment as Caesar in 317, he was presumably also under consideration earlier. Licinius' rejection of that proposal seems sensible enough: though he and Bassianus were brothers-in-law, Crispus was related only to Constantine. Moreover, Licinius may have been unwilling to accept any proposal once he discovered, by late 314, that Constantia was pregnant.

³⁷ See Barnes and Vanderspoel 1984: 175–176, for the view that he was indeed a son of Fausta.

³⁸ As Caesar in most literary sources, as Augustus on coins; see Barnes 1982: 15.

basic Diocletianic system of rule. On 1 March 317, Constantine established a new regime. Constantine II was named Caesar, together with his cousin Valerius Licinianus Licinius, the son of Licinius and Constantia, and with his much older half-brother Crispus, son of Constantine and his first wife Minervina.³⁹ While the infants continued to reside with their parents, Crispus, now in his late teens or possibly his early twenties, was sent to Trier to govern Gaul and Britain and to conduct campaigns.⁴⁰ For the next several years, there was uneasy peace between the two emperors, as each continued to secure the boundaries of the empire. When Licinius began to enact measures against Christianity in the late 310s,⁴¹ Constantine began to threaten his co-emperor, as relations between the two deteriorated to the point that the consular lists for the East and West differed each year from 321 to 324; in 323, some of Constantine's soldiers entered Licinius' territory, generating a protest but no military action. By 324, Licinius' relationship with the Christians in his territory had become tenuous enough that bishops in Pontus may have appealed to Constantine; at any rate, several bishops there were executed and some churches were destroyed. Little more was needed for Constantine to undertake a campaign posing as the champion of Christianity. His goal was the sole control of the empire, assisted by his sons, eventually including his third, Constantius, who had been born 7 August 317. In early summer 324,

³⁹The legitimacy of the marriage, which may have occurred early in the 290s, has in the past been questioned, but most now regard Minervina as a wife, not a concubine. Pohlsander 1984: 80, lists the views recorded in earlier treatments; he himself regards her as a concubine. Barnes 2011: 49, speculates that she was a close relative of Diocletian. As Chausson 2007: 107, notes, there is no evidence to indicate whether she died or was put aside before Constantine married Fausta.

⁴⁰At some point he married a woman named Helena, who produced a child in 322, as is evident from *Cođ. Theod.* 9.38.1. Chausson 2007: 121–122, 127, suggests that she was a daughter of Fl. Constantius, consul in 327 and Praetorian Prefect 324–327, whom he conjectures to be a second son of Constantius I and Helena. It is possible that he was related in a different way, e.g. a nephew of Constantius, or not at all. *PLRE* 1: 225 (Fl. Constantius 5), notes that he may be a relative of Constantine, but without further specification. It is possible that Helena's name derives from a different origin; for example, she may have been a relative of her husband's grandmother Helena but otherwise not related to the family of Constantius. Despite later practice in the dynasty, an intra-familial marriage is not required.

⁴¹Barnes 1981: 70–73. Since he had previously lost two battles to Constantine, it is unlikely that he intended to incite his colleague into further military action. More likely, Licinius hoped to limit the growing impact of Christianity on government and society, perhaps in a mistaken belief that Constantine was still as committed to a multi-cultic perspective as he had been several years earlier and would therefore not object to his actions.

Constantine invaded the East on land and sea. On 3 July his army defeated the soldiers of Licinius near Hadrianople. After naming his *magister officiorum* Martinianus an imperial colleague,⁴² Licinius fled to Byzantium; his army surrendered. A fleet under Crispus' command defeated Licinius' fleet and sailed to Byzantium, forcing a further flight by Licinius to Chalcedon. Constantine pursued him, and on 18 September at Chrysopolis, Licinius was defeated again; he fled to Nicomedia, from where he sent Constantia and the bishop Eusebius to plead for him. They secured his life, and that of Martinianus (*Anonymus Valesianus* 5.28). On the following day, Licinius laid down the insignia of his office and proclaimed his loyalty to his new master; he was sent to Thessalonica where he lived as a private citizen under house arrest. Martinianus ended up in Cappadocia, where he was eliminated (*Anonymus Valesianus* 5.29). In 325, Licinius too was put to death, on charges of stirring up a rebellion against Constantine. His son, spared in 324, was put to death a little later.⁴³

Constantine occupied himself with two important matters during the years after his defeat of Licinius. For the second time in a dozen years, he had fought and conquered a familial rival to gain control of half an empire by employing the Christian deity as his patron. It was time, therefore, to acknowledge that he owed the progress of his imperial ambitions to this deity. Whether his bishops had backed him into a corner by pointing out that their god's assistance deserved enthusiastic worship in the manner that the god expected, in other words, unequivocal monotheism, or whether Constantine during the years after his victory at the Milvian Bridge had come to this realization himself, cannot be determined with certainty. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere between the extremes, with Constantine gradually becoming more willing, as he was more able in political terms, to become a complete Christian, to the exclusion of other

⁴² Like Valens, as Caesar in most literary sources, as Augustus on coins; see Barnes 1982: 15.

⁴³ See *PLRE* 1: 509–510 (Licinius 4), for sources. According to the *Anonymus Valesianus* 5.29, Licinius left a wife and son behind him, but does not specify when the latter was killed. The other sources, including Eutr. 10.6.3; Oros. 7.28.26, link the death of Licinius the younger to that of Crispus; that would imply a date of 326. Jerome, *Chron.s.a.* 325, dates the execution to 325, but also names Crispus in the entry. If the main point of these comments is the execution of former Caesars, their appearance together is sensible, even if the dates of their deaths differ. On that basis, it is better not to be too specific about the date of Licinius' death.

religious interests.⁴⁴ Not long after he gained control of the East, the emperor issued letters clarifying the extent to which Christians and their churches might recover what they had lost in the persecutions that had afflicted the East.⁴⁵ Subsequently, Constantine ordered an ecumenical assembly of bishops to meet to resolve the issues raised by Arius and the resulting disharmony within the church. Whether or not the emperor understood the subtle issues involved is in some sense irrelevant; operating from his personal understanding of his religion, he had begun to think more openly and more fully as a Christian, and as a Christian he was displeased with ecclesiastical disunity.⁴⁶ It was certainly not Constantine's fault that the Council of Nicaea in 325 did not solve the issue, but instead created a new set of doctrinal statements that could be, and was, interpreted variously.⁴⁷

Other measures in favour of Christianity included the provision of funds for the copying of scriptures and for the building of churches, the grant of permission for bishops to use the public post system, and the declaration that bishops could sit in judgement in some legal cases. However much some of the empire's inhabitants were annoyed, Constantine was hardly the first emperor to promote and assist a religious perspective that he himself preferred. Augustus, Elagabalus (in particular) and Aurelian, among others, had done the same. Clearly, emperors had always had the right to do what Constantine was doing; the difference in Constantine's case was the religious perspective in question. One final point on the emperor's activity in the realm of religion should be mentioned. At some point, Constantine sent a letter to Shapur, Shah (AD 309–372) of the Persian empire, warning him to respect the rights of the Christians in his territory.⁴⁸ Neither he nor his advisers could possibly

⁴⁴ See Drake 2012: 111–116, who also makes a point about parameters of discussion, though somewhat differently, and with different intent.

⁴⁵ See Barnes 1981: 208–212.

⁴⁶ As is evident in his earlier (and futile) attempt to quiet the discord created by the Donatists. In general, see Barnes 1981: 54–61, for a brief account. Much recent work regards the issue of sectarian violence of greater importance than theological differences; the best example is Shaw 2011.

⁴⁷ The events (from 324–361) in this controversy are treated thoroughly enough by Barnes 1981, 1993. “Arianism” continues to engage historians, and the quantity of scholarship continues to increase rapidly.

⁴⁸ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.9–13, includes a transcript; a translation appears in Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 150–152. Shapur was born in 302, after the death of his father Narses, and his reign is backdated in some sources to his time in his mother's womb, presumably to deny

have been so unschooled in the art of diplomacy to suppose that Shapur would meekly comply. They must have understood that the Persian ruler would regard this as illegitimate interference; the goal must therefore have been either an attempt to goad Shapur to war or to create a pretext to go to war. The prosecution of the inevitable war fell to Constantius II, after his father's death.

Constantine's second preoccupation was dynastic reconstruction, to coin a congenial phrase for an execution and an intra-familial murder. Already in 324, Constantine appointed Constantius, his seven-year-old second son by Fausta,⁴⁹ to the rank of Caesar. That created an imperial college of a single Augustus and three of his sons as Caesars. The college was now more dynastic than it had ever been; while Diocletian's divided empire may be said to have survived in some sense, in another it had not, since a single individual was now the primary ruler not only by seniority, but also by rank; that had not been the case since Diocletian made Maximian Augustus in 286. Though a division into four equally administered regions might have been achieved by the appointment of his third son by Fausta, Constans (born in 320 or 323⁵⁰), to the rank of Caesar, Constantine chose not to recreate that situation. He was apparently more interested in a reduction of the number of Caesars to two, presumably one in the West, the other in the East. He achieved this with the execution of his oldest son Crispus. The stories surrounding this incident and the more or less simultaneous elimination of Fausta provide little to assist an historian attempting to understand the precise circumstances.⁵¹ Ostensibly, Fausta accused Crispus of sexual impropriety; after his execution, the emperor's mother Helena convinced her son that Crispus had not been guilty of anything; soon, Fausta died a horrendous death in an overheated

legitimacy to previous successors to Narses. For the sources, see Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 143–144.

⁴⁹Born exactly one year after his brother, on 1 August 317. See Barnes and Vanderspoel 1984: 175–176.

⁵⁰A panegyric for Constantine in 321 remarks that Rome was already rejoicing in the Caesars and their brothers, in the plural (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 36.1). The Caesars are Crispus and Constantine II, while the brothers are Constantius II and either Constans or another brother who presumably did not live much beyond 321. Anyone who recalled the birth of a son in 320 might easily later assume that this was Constans, that is, the third birth announcement for the third surviving son. It seems less likely that the birthdate of Constans would be confused with that of a younger brother who did not survive infancy; this, in combination with the other evidence, makes a birthdate for Constans in 323 most likely.

⁵¹See, for a survey of evidence and views, Pohlsander 1984.

bath. The tropes are palpable: an empress attempting to secure the success of her own children by falsely accusing her stepson; a mother-in-law impugning the charges made by her daughter-in-law, whose half-sister had supplanted her in Constantius' bed⁵²; an emperor murdering his wife, more or less at the behest of his mother. All this seems to represent carefully managed propaganda more than reality, as Constantine sought to explain a series of unusual developments within the imperial family.

Though Constantine's perspective may have developed as events unfolded, the carefully constructed narrative sequence seems rather to suggest a deliberate effort to dispose of Crispus and Fausta. The fact that Constantine found Crispus guilty does not mean that he was. Conversely, it is not impossible that the Caesar was guilty; he perhaps saw the influence of Fausta on behalf of her sons as a threat and responded to his fears for his own future by some injudicious comment or behaviour. In turn, Fausta perhaps feared for the fate of her sons, should Crispus outlive Constantine,⁵³ and it may not have been difficult to convince her husband that some of his sons were in mortal danger. At any rate, whether Crispus was guilty or not, Constantine was unprepared to make any allowance for his oldest son and had him executed.

Fausta's death in an overheated bath has been seen as the unfortunate consequence of an attempt to induce an abortion.⁵⁴ Though the suggestion requires broad knowledge that heat could induce abortions, the information could be included with the announcement of her death. An apparent pregnancy could, of course, substantiate a charge of adultery. There is, however, a problem: why on earth would Constantine have condemned Fausta's memory if her death was an accident? His obvious response should have been an order for the execution of the slaves who had overheated the water, not a *damnatio memoriae* of the poor woman who died. If it truly had been a horrible accident, the only possibility is that he had not initially intended to have her executed or condemn her memory.⁵⁵ But when she died, he saw a convenient opportunity to

⁵² On this specific point, see Pohlsander 1995: 23.

⁵³ So too Barnes 2011: 148.

⁵⁴ Woods 1998. If, as he assumes, the pregnancy was unwanted, surely she would have attempted to induce an abortion long before her condition became obvious. If she was known to be pregnant, she presumably expected to pass off the child as Constantine's.

⁵⁵ Barnes 2011: 147–148, suggests suicide, since an execution would leave as witnesses the slaves who might gossip. But the slaves could equally gossip in a case of suicide; and the *damnatio memoriae* is equally difficult to explain on this solution, unless Constantine heart-

strengthen the condemnation of his son Crispus, particularly if questions about his guilt had been raised. Yet Crispus' *damnatio memoriae* was never lifted, nor was that of Fausta, in Constantine's reign or in the early part of the reigns of her sons. Thus, it seems most likely that, for whatever reason or reasons, Constantine had Crispus and Fausta executed. The latter's death in a bath was perhaps made to look like an accident, perhaps even an accident designed to look like an attempt to cause an abortion, precisely to link Fausta more closely to Crispus.⁵⁶ In the final analysis, Constantine appears to have eliminated Fausta to provide additional justification for the elimination of Crispus.⁵⁷ On a related note, the emperor's half-brothers, still out of favour at this point, presumably now definitely understood that Constantine was quite willing to deal harshly with family members, if he felt it necessary.

The consequence of AD 326 was that three young boys and their sisters lost a mother and a half-brother. Public grief was not possible, because of the *damnatio memoriae*, which, in the final analysis, the boys seem to have accepted, since they kept it in place for a time at least. Two points, though, are in order here. In the first place, by the time the boys became Augusti, nearly a dozen years had elapsed; it was perhaps too late to change anything. Secondly, any immediate lifting of the *damnatio memoriae* would call into question the judgement of their father; in the summer of 337, they could not afford to do that, nor could they raise the spectre of a sordid family past. Their youth at the time of their mother's death is mirrored by their youth in the summer of 337: Constantine II and Constantius turned twenty-one and twenty that summer, and Constans was at most seventeen years old. Though they had all been Caesars for varying lengths of time, they were even more vulnerable than imperial successors normally were at the beginnings of their reigns. In such circumstances, there was no

lessly used a suicide as justification of the execution of Crispus. Though death by bath was unknown to Roman law as a method of execution, so was the pouring of molten lead [*liquentis plumbi*] down a nurse's throat in cases of *raptus* marriage; cf. *Cod. Theod.* 9.24.1, enacted by Constantine in 320.

⁵⁶As Barnes 1981: 220, points out, given their respective residences and travels, it would have been almost impossible for Fausta and Crispus to have committed adultery in the normal manner—and *in vitro* adultery had not yet been invented. But the inhabitants of the empire would not necessarily have been aware enough of this difficulty to question the charge.

⁵⁷It would be more than a little Machiavellian for Constantine to suggest to Fausta that she could assist in the *post eventum* justification of Crispus' execution by accusing him of (attempted?) adultery and then to eliminate her because she was the other partner in the adultery!

point in reminding the public of their mother's infidelity: her tryst with Crispus, alleged or real, involuntary or voluntary, could be used to question the paternity of all her children. Presumably, those who raised questions would be those who anticipated a claim to the throne if somehow the sons of Constantine could be dispossessed. Allegations of dubious paternity might well underpin any suggestion that Constantine II, Constantius and Constans were not legitimate successors. In short, Constantine's condemnation of Fausta essentially forced his sons to eliminate any relatives who might try to question their legitimacy as their father's sons. In other words, Constantine's sons had little choice in regard to potential threats from relatives precisely because Constantine himself had given those relatives an argument to employ. That may help to explain the somewhat atypical viciousness of the elimination of relatives, many male descendants of Constantius I by his second wife.⁵⁸ Accessions might be brutal, but, unless there had been a civil war, they were rarely as brutal as the accessions of the sons of Constantine in 337.⁵⁹ We can only assume that these new emperors felt very insecure. When they finally felt secure, Fausta might be mentioned in more positive terms, by Julian for example, in his first panegyric of Constantius II (*Or.* 1.9b–c).

A curiosity of the early reigns of the sons of Constantine, rarely remarked, is the prominence given to Theodora, daughter of Maximian and second wife of Constantius I; she is depicted on coinage with the title of Augusta just after the brutal accessions of 337.⁶⁰ She was the mother and grandmother of the nine relatives who were killed.⁶¹ Her title as Augusta must be related to the attempt of Constantine's sons to forge a legitimacy in 337. The *damnatio* of Fausta had, essentially, eliminated any link to Maximian; it made sense, perhaps, for Constantine to abandon any familial ties to Maximian and Maxentius, once he felt secure enough to do

⁵⁸Descendants in the female line might survive, e.g. Nepotianus (as emphasized by Tougher 2012a: esp.188). He was also still very young, as were Gallus and Julian, descendants in the male line who survived; perhaps their youth was the primary key to survival, since they had not had any thoughts of participation in imperial administration.

⁵⁹The most thorough, and cogent, treatment of the summer of 337 and its aftermath is Burgess 2008. See also Marcos 2014.

⁶⁰For example, it is not noted at *PLRE* 1: 895 (Theodora 1). Burgess 2008: 22–24, does treat the coinage, and suggests (24) that it was produced primarily by Constantine II at Trier, as an act of expiation, to show that the deaths of her descendants were not intended to “reflect poorly on her as a mother”. That is not inconsistent with the view that the sons of Constantine needed her as a surrogate mother.

⁶¹Cf. the chapter on imperial women by Shaun Tougher in this volume.

so. Indeed, the elimination of Fausta may have been an active final step in the process. But if that made sense in 326, it created problems in 337. The sons of Constantine were descendants of Constantine, Constantius I and also of Maximian, but only through their condemned mother; their rivals were descendants of Constantius and of Maximian, with no *damnatio memoriae* to block the possibility of claiming Maximian as an imperial ancestor. Though the sons of Constantine equalled their uncles in the amount of DNA drawn from Maximian (since their uncles were sons of one daughter of Maximian as they themselves were of another daughter), the *damnatio memoriae* of their mother meant that they could not claim the connection.⁶² Considered from that point of view, the relatives, cousins as well as uncles, had an imperial lineage that included Maximian, whereas the sons of Constantine could only go back as far as Constantius. Seen in this context, the use of the title Augusta is linked to a wish to reestablish a familial connection to Maximian; this may further support a view that the condemnation of Fausta, which would achieve the same result, could not easily be lifted. The coinage in question was minted at only three places, Trier, Rome and Constantinople, nominal capitals of the three sons, and deliberately recalls some coinage of Fausta⁶³ that celebrates Fausta as the Celtic *DEA NUTRIX*, with a couple of babies at her breasts. Theodora's coins show her with a single baby and the legend *PIETAS ROMANA*, in contrast to Fausta's *SPES REIPUBLICAE*, but a recollection is surely intended. It appears that Theodora was a surrogate for her half-sister Fausta to link the sons of Constantine to Maximian. Given that the coinage honours her in dative form as *FL MAX THEODORAE AVG*, it is a dedication designed to bolster their legitimacy as new emperors. In the same context, new coins of Helena as Augusta were minted at Trier, Rome and Constantinople, again mainly in the dative, to proclaim yet another link of Constantine's sons to Constantius I.⁶⁴ In other words, the sons of Constantine honoured both wives of Constantius I, and they in

⁶²That is presumably why *PLRE* 1: 223 (Flavius Claudius Constantinus 3), can suggest that Constantine II may have been illegitimate because no source suggests descent from Maximian.

⁶³Vanderspoel and Mann 2002.

⁶⁴See, briefly, Drijvers 1992: 43–44, who also mentions the coinage of Theodora and notes that she was commemorated as an ancestress of a branch of the Constantinian family but does not address the oddity of commemoration in the very period that her actual descendants were being slaughtered. The reverse legend for Helena in this context is *PAX PUBLICA*; examples from Trier and Constantinople identify her as *FL IVL HELENAE*

turn, from some unspecified domicile in the underworld,⁶⁵ gave their approval to the outcome of the events of 337.

Not long after he gained control of the East, Constantine set in motion the process that led to the establishment of Constantinople as first a dynastic city, then eventually as the capital of the eastern half of the Roman empire.⁶⁶ Perhaps precisely because the refounding of Byzantium was intended as a dynastic city, Constantine achieved friendlier terms with his half-siblings by the time of the dedication of Constantinople and began to employ them in his administration.⁶⁷ Fl. Dalmatius was a consul in 333 and served as a military commander subsequently, while Julius Constantius was consul in 335 and was given the rank of *patricius*. Nephews, too, were promoted. Fl. Dalmatius, son of a third half-brother, who had probably died before 337, was raised to the rank of Caesar in 335 and sent to Illyricum.⁶⁸ Since Constantine had named Constans a Caesar on 25 December 333, Dalmatius was a fourth Caesar⁶⁹; in a sense, Tetrarchic administration was reestablished with four regional Caesars, all under the supervision of a single Augustus. Dalmatius' brother Hannibalianus was appointed *rex regum et ponticarum gentium* in 335. Though details remain obscure, this may have been a response to Persian interference in Armenia that possibly included the kidnapping of the Armenian king.⁷⁰ Those Armenian nobles who appealed to Constantine were presumably stunned that he chose to exert a stronger claim to Armenia than Rome had ever done by imposing a dynastically linked ruler. Some Armenians reacted by inducing a revolt and by asking the Persians to install an Armenian as king; this was part of the background to the impending war with Persia at

AVG, in the dative form, as noted by Vida 2014: 174, who considers various series of coins for one or more family members named Helena; *IVL* does not appear on her earlier coins.

⁶⁵ Since Helena certainly had died, but neither appears as *DIVA*, the use of the dedicatory dative for both empresses presumably suggests that Theodora was also no longer alive.

⁶⁶ See Vanderspoel 1995: 51–70.

⁶⁷ Hunt 1998: 3, suggests that Constantine intended a succession by the two families stemming from Constantius I. That is not incompatible with a suggestion that some sense of dynasty lay behind the renewed favour granted to his (half-) relatives, but it is brutally evident that Constantine's sons held a different perspective.

⁶⁸ Maraval 2013: 23, suggests that Dalmatius was married to Constantine's daughter Helena, but offers no evidence in support. Marcos 2014 mentions the possibility as well.

⁶⁹ On the re-emergence of Constantine's half-siblings and particularly on Dalmatius, see Marcos 2014.

⁷⁰ If Baynes 1910 was correct to transfer that event, dated to the reign of Valens, to this period.

Constantine's death.⁷¹ Constantius II resolved matters in Rome's favour—the murder of Hannibalianus removed the primary irritant though it also led to unrest⁷²—but Shapur continued to harass Rome's territory along the northern Tigris, and especially Nisibis, without significant success during the remainder of the 330s and the 340s.⁷³

The names of other nephews killed in 337 have escaped the historical record, and it remains unknown whether more of them had participated in imperial administration. Beyond the inclusion of more relatives in his administration, Constantine forged links between the branches of the larger family by arranging marriages between (half-) cousins. Hannibalianus married Constantine's daughter Constantina, who was also given the title Augusta, presumably as the oldest female directly related to Constantine: Helena had died in 329. Constantius married a daughter of Julius Constantius by 336. Constantine II seems to have married by 335; his wife's identity is unknown, but it would fit the pattern if she were a daughter of a half-brother of Constantine.⁷⁴ Subsequently, both survivors (in the male line) of the purge would marry (half-) cousins: Gallus became the husband of the widowed Constantina, while Julian was given Constantine's and Fausta's daughter Helena as his bride. Only Constans certainly escaped a familial marriage; he was betrothed to Olympias, the daughter of the Praetorian Prefect Fl. Ablabius, but the latter's execution for treason may have made her an unsuitable bride.⁷⁵ Constans never married her nor, it seems, anyone else, though Athanasius claims that he protected her as if

⁷¹The source is Faustus of Byzantium, *History of the Armenians* 20–21 (trans. in Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 303–309; their remarks at 380–381, n. 22, are the basis for the reconstruction offered here).

⁷²Julian, *Or.* 1.18d–21a, notes that Constantius was meeting with his brothers when the unrest broke out, but restored order upon his return to the East.

⁷³The sources for Romano-Persian relations in this period are collected in Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 164–210.

⁷⁴The pattern need not, of course, be inevitable. Maraval 2013: 14, suggests that he was married “probablement à une fille de Flavius Optatus”, but neither cites evidence nor argues the point. Chausson 2007: 110–111, has no suggestion on the identity of Constantine II's wife. See the discussion, in the next paragraph below, of Constantia, perhaps a cousin who married Constantine or the daughter of Julius Constantius who married Constantius II.

⁷⁵Constantius dismissed him in the aftermath of Constantine's death. Whether or not he had imperial ambitions, he was apparently tricked into committing himself and executed. Chausson 2007: 152, implies that he may have been a son-in-law of a half-brother of Constantine; on that view, Olympias was a descendant of Constantius I and a cousin of Constans. Fl. Ablabius is not, however, to be included among the nine familial murders in 337, since he lacked the requisite DNA to be included in that group.

she were his wife until his death.⁷⁶ Constans' failure to marry the daughter of a disgraced official⁷⁷ raises an interesting question: did the murders of relatives transform the cousin/wife of Constantius⁷⁸ into an unsuitable partner? Unfortunately, nothing is known of her fate. Julian implies that she was the full sister of Gallus; since the latter was born about 325/6 and had a full older brother (slain in 337), their sister may have still have been very young at the time of her marriage, young enough, perhaps, to obtain an annulment.⁷⁹ Though Fausta remained Constantine's wife after he killed her father and brother, that outcome need not apply here. In any case, Julian's half-sister was almost certainly not eliminated in 337: he would surely have noted this.⁸⁰

It is possible that the girl was quietly put aside in the aftermath of 337⁸¹: it is even possible to suggest an identity for her or for the widow of Constantine II. In 358, when Liberius was recalled as bishop of Rome, he is said to have stayed in the cemetery of St. Agnes, with a sister of

⁷⁶ *Hist. Ar.* 69, where the bishop also claims that Constantius handed Olympias over to barbarians. Ascribing responsibility for her survival to Constans is merely an element of Athanasius' attack on Constantius. For a study of invectives against emperors by bishops, see Flower 2013.

⁷⁷ Since her betrothal to his son was presumably arranged by Constantine, Olympias was born before Constantine's death and was thus probably old enough to marry by 350; if so, some other explanation is needed. She eventually married Arsaces II of Armenia, perhaps in 354; see Baynes 1910: 631–632. According to Faustus of Byzantium (4.15) and Moses of Chorene, *Hist. Armen.* 3.24, she was poisoned by rival consorts. Despite the tendentious remark of Athanasius, she clearly was not reduced to marriage with a barbarian; instead, she married into the royal house of a people once briefly ruled by Constantius' sister Constantina and his cousin Hannibalianus.

⁷⁸ This would also apply to the wife of Constantine II, if she too were a cousin, but nothing beyond the fact of his marriage by 335 is known. If Constantine II had married a daughter of Flavius Optatus (see n. 74 above), she too would be the daughter of a disgraced official, since Flavius Optatus was another of the victims in 337.

⁷⁹ Chausson 2007: 111, with n. 22, wonders whether Ammianus Marcellinus' remark (21.16.6) that Constantius was chaste his entire life might indicate a long period during which he was not married, hinting that he repudiated his first wife in 337 and did not remarry until c. 353. That is not the only possible reason, as will be evident below.

⁸⁰ *Ep. ad Ath.* 272d.

⁸¹ It is possible that the girl herself chose to leave Constantius, with or without a divorce, perhaps by expressing a voluntary preference for an ascetic life, though she will have had difficulty finding a male relative to intercede on her behalf. Constantine's law on divorce (*Cod. Theod.* 3.16.1) permitted a woman to divorce a murderer; for discussion, see Evans Grubbs 1995: 228–234. Julian called Constantius a murderer, but it is unlikely that his half-sister could have used that label to obtain a divorce in 337.

Constantius, identified as Constantia Augusta, who, as an orthodox Christian, was unwilling to intervene on his behalf with Constantius, since she knew what her brother's plans were.⁸² This sister cannot be Constantina who had had close ties to the church of St. Agnes in the 340s but died in 354. The remark is sometimes regarded as a mistake for Helena,⁸³ her younger sister; she attended her brother's visit to Rome in 357. But there is no evidence that Helena was ever Augusta.⁸⁴ Secondly, it seems odd that Helena would stay at Rome from May 357 well into 358, when her brother had long since departed. An additional daughter of Constantine has been suggested,⁸⁵ but could she instead be a cousin who had been married to Constantine II or Constantius and had become Augusta by virtue of her marriage?⁸⁶ The Latin word in the *Liber Pontificalis* is *germanam* for her and *germanum* for Constantius, terms typically used of siblings, but sometimes to mean "brotherly, sisterly" or "like a brother or sister". In any case, the text is clearly mistaken in some way, and it is possible that the woman was a former wife or widowed sister-in-law⁸⁷ instead of a misidentified sister. Naturally, a cousin might well have the name Constantia,⁸⁸ but this must remain conjectural. To complete this survey of

⁸² *Lib. pont.* 37.4.

⁸³ *PLRE* 1: 410–411 (Helena 3), claims that Helena is mistakenly called Constanti[n]a at *Lib. pont.* 37.4.

⁸⁴ Constantina Augusta did, of course, outrank her husband Hannibalianus, so this was not impossible. See Vida 2014 for the suggestion that she was Augusta as the wife of Dalmatius, just as her sister was Augusta as wife of Dalmatius' brother Hannibalianus. As noted above (n. 68), no evidence for a marriage between Dalmatius and Helena has survived.

⁸⁵ See, e.g. Chausson 2007: 115–116. Chausson's other conjectures, such as a third wife for Constantine who bore him both Helena and the supposed Constantia, in my view go too far. Barnes 2011: 150–152, points out the complete lack of evidence for Chausson's suggestion.

⁸⁶ If she was indeed Julian's half-sister living in Rome, an orthodox bishop might have granted her a divorce from a heretical husband. Liberius became bishop at Rome in May 352; he was subsequently sent into exile by Constantius (who had previously denied his request for a council at Aquileia) and returned to Rome after Constantius' visit in 357. Since Constantius is usually thought to have married Eusebia c. 353, is it possible that he had recently been divorced by Constantia with Liberius' support and that his attitude to the bishop was partly a reaction to this and not only a religious response to Liberius' orthodoxy?

⁸⁷ Since he notes that Constantia knew of Constantius' plans for the see of Rome, the author may have known of some connection between them and assumed that she was his sister, rather than the more unusual ex-wife or former sister-in-law.

⁸⁸ As another example of the name in the family, cf. Cameron 1996 who argues that Orfitus' wife Constantia belonged to the imperial family (she was the mother of Rusticana, wife of Q. Aurelius Symmachus, the Prefect of Rome in 384). See, too, Chausson 2007: 116.

possible imperial relatives, no son of Constantine who outlived his father is known ever to have laid eyes on offspring: Constantius' daughter Constantia was born after her father's death, and Constans perhaps never married. As for their sisters, Helena had at least one miscarriage and possibly gave birth to a baby boy eliminated by the midwife.⁸⁹ Constantina and Gallus produced a daughter who was probably still alive in the early 360s.⁹⁰

On 9 September 337, the three sons of Constantius emerged as the new Augusti. The main beneficiary of the tripartite division of empire was Constans, who received most of what Dalmatius had been governing as Caesar; Thrace was allocated to the East, under the control of Constantius. After the conference of brothers, Constantius returned to Antioch. Constantine II resided at Trier. Already as Caesar he had maintained an imperial presence there from 328; before that, he generally resided with his father and may at times have joined him on campaign.⁹¹ Whether he ever saw much of his brothers is unknown. Most likely, they were relative strangers to him, which may help to explain his attitude to his youngest brother. He apparently regarded himself as his guardian, and presumably felt that as oldest brother he should have been given more territory. Some sources suggest that he asked Constans for portions of North Africa and that the negotiations broke down badly enough by 340 that he decided to take some areas from his brother by force. His years as Caesar and Augustus had not taught him to spot an ambush: he was caught and killed, before Constans had even committed all his forces to the fight. This posturing over territory seems to be merely sibling rivalry. Constantine II surely knew that Illyricum, Africa and Italy were often grouped together in a tripartite division of empire. From a territorial perspective, he was probably in the wrong, and, thus, the impression is that he wanted control over more of the empire and perhaps more control over Constans.⁹² It is not unlikely that he was attempting to harass Constans into compliance or

⁸⁹ See Amm. Marc. 16.10.18–19.

⁹⁰ Julian, *Ep. ad Ath.* 272d, is the only source for her existence, when he accuses Constantius of killing the father of his niece, which suggests that she was still alive. Chausson 2007: 114, suggests that her name was Anastasia.

⁹¹ Barnes 1982: 84.

⁹² For a critical reappraisal of the conflict between Constantine II and Constans, see the chapter by William Lewis in this volume.

provoke him into a war, almost certainly not at Athanasius' urging.⁹³ Cleverly, Constans agreed in principle to redistribution, but stood his ground on details. That allowed him to appear cooperative without costing him anything; in fact, he gained territory.

The victory of Constans was followed by the typical reaction: a purge of the supporters and the *damnatio memoriae* of Constantine II, applied immediately by Constans and eventually by Constantius too. Presumably the letter of Constantine II from June 337 in support of Athanasius⁹⁴ lost what little real impact it may once have had as a letter of reference, since its author had now never existed, though the bishop nevertheless continued to mention it as evidence of imperial support. He later claimed to have had the support of Vetranio and Magnentius,⁹⁵ referees who cannot have improved his standing with Constantius, while Constans nearly went to civil war on behalf of Athanasius. Given that Constans, Vetranio and Magnentius were all at some point enemies of Constantius, the bishop's association with civil war or potential civil war suggests an attitude of defiance or a willingness to threaten civil war against Constantius. The bishop must have found support somewhere for this sort of aggressive political game; he was, after all, a bishop who could be executed as easily as he could be exiled, unless he had powerful support behind him, support that must have been imperial. The only imperial constant in the West throughout the late 330s, 340s and early 350s is Constantina, who was busy with church-building and other Christian activities at Rome, while simultaneously, perhaps, harbouring resentment against her brothers. Perhaps she pushed Athanasius and her siblings, Constans at least and perhaps Constantine II, and potentially also Magnentius and Vetranio, to oppose Constantius on the issue of Athanasius. The bishop does not mention her role, but Constantina appears to have held to a western orthodoxy. It is possible to see her involvement with Vetranio and her encouragement of Gallus as actions against Constantius, and it seems likely that she played a

⁹³ According to Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16.21, Constantius remarked to Liberius that Athanasius had cost him his brother Constantine II, presumably by encouraging the attempt against Constans (see Barnes 1993: 52), and instilled in Constans a hatred for Constantius himself. Since Athanasius appears to have been at Rome, in Constans' territory, and wrote to both brothers (Barnes 1993: 51–55), that seems more than a little unlikely. Rather, Constantius appears to be engaging in the kind of slander favoured by bishops in this period. See Flower 2013: 78–126.

⁹⁴ See Barnes 1993: 34, 51–52.

⁹⁵ See Barnes 1993: 129, with 279, n. 37.

more significant role in imperial politics at an earlier date than has thus far been understood. Already Augusta when Constantine died, she had held a higher title than her brothers for some years.

Initially, Constans and Constantius were not obviously at odds, even if they held different views about Athanasius. Constans inherited his eldest brother's desire to see the bishop fully restored to Alexandria. Less clear is whether he chose to support Athanasius for religious or for political reasons. It is a little odd that the brothers had different religious preferences, but perhaps it was expedient for Constans to adopt the stance of the Christians in his territory. His perspective did give him a pretext to attack his brother, in religious terms at least, and with his soldiers, should it come to that. It very nearly did, for the ecclesiastical historians (e.g., Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22–23) mention a letter from Constans to Constantius, advising the latter to permit Athanasius to return to his see, for he would himself, if necessary, reinstall the bishop personally; Constans moved armies eastwards to punctuate his threat. Constantius, far too busy with the Persians to deal with a civil war just then, gave in, and when the bronze coinage was reformed soon thereafter, it shouted out a slogan of harmony (*FEL TEMP REPARATIO*). It is no real surprise to note that Constans spent most of the later 340s on the Danube or in northern Italy, unlike earlier years spent mainly in Gaul; Constantius, in turn, was more often in the west of his realm than he had been previously,⁹⁶ despite continuing problems on the eastern frontier. Some of this was posturing, but it seems clear that neither brother fully trusted the other. Their difficulties were probably well-understood at the time and reached the historical record in odd ways. For example, Athanasius (*History of the Arians* 69) complains that, after Constans' death, Constantius only pretended to build him a mausoleum; though the comment is more than a little tendentious it presupposes some public knowledge of the difficult relations between the brothers.

Not much is known about Constans' activities, and no satisfactory explanation has been offered for his precipitous visit to Britain in late winter 343.⁹⁷ Presumably, he governed with some level of competence, but

⁹⁶ Attested at Ancyra in spring 347; probably at Constantinople in 349.

⁹⁷ There is no hint of military or political trouble serious enough to require an immediate visit, though Ammianus Marcellinus notes (28.3.8) that his (lost) account of the incident mentioned some group called the *areani*, that was later disbanded by the general Theodosius on grounds of corruption. Was it, therefore, personal, perhaps connected with the death of the so-called Spital Lady whose sarcophagus, bones and surviving grave goods are now in the

not to universal satisfaction. Discontent with Constans rose to the point that on 18 January 350 Magnentius was proclaimed emperor. He had powerful supporters in the aristocracy at Rome, among them Clodius Celsinus Adelfius. The latter had married into the Probi, one of the earliest elite families to adopt Christianity. These were the people of Constantina's circle, and that point raises an unanswerable question: was Constantina linked to the usurpation of Magnentius, either as its instigator or as a ready supporter?⁹⁸ Given a level of planning that included prominent Roman Christians, it may seem unlikely that she was unaware of the plot—and, if so, she failed to warn her brother. Yet, she soon appeared in Illyricum, where she propped up Vetranio, who claimed the throne there, ostensibly to hold the area for Constantius.⁹⁹ In fact, Vetranio was a true rival to

Museum of London? Discovered during excavations in the Spitalfields area in London, she belonged to the highest of the elite, judging from the almost imperial quality of her grave goods and attire. She has not generated much bibliographic attention and is barely mentioned at <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/galleries/roman-london/>. The BBC programme “Pagans of Roman Britain” revealed that lead isotope analysis of her teeth (conducted by Dr. Janet Montgomery of Durham University) suggests an origin in south-west Europe, possibly Spain (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01s74g9>). See also “Noble Roman body discovered in London” at <http://www.britannia.com/history/londonhistory/spitbod.html> for an account of her discovery and a description of the finds.

⁹⁸This is not as far-fetched as it may at first seem: Magnentius' wife Justina was related to the dynasty; her mother was probably an otherwise unknown daughter of Julius Constantius who married Justus in the early 330s; see Chausson 2007: 104–105, 160–165. Barnes 1982: 44, had suggested that she was a daughter of Crispus. Justus, who, as the spouse of a cousin, presumably belonged to Constantina's Roman circle, was executed by Constantius in 352/3 for disclosing a dream that he would have an imperial grandson (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.31.11–13). Most likely, his affiliation with Magnentius through his daughter was the reason, with the dream as pretext; see Barnes 1993: 270, n. 11. That might imply that Justina was pregnant at the time. No child with Magnentius is known, and John of Antioch (fr. 187) claims that she was too young to bear children during her first marriage; see Chausson 2007: 100, but pregnancies did not always result in surviving children. Justus did indeed have an imperial grandson (Valentinian II), but his dream presumably did not anticipate an outcome that far into the future.

⁹⁹It is more than a little curious that the key role was not assumed by Vulcacius Rufinus, the current Praetorian Prefect in Illyricum, a brother-in-law of Julius Constantius and thus an imperial relative of sorts; perhaps that is exactly why Constantina left him on the sidelines. If he was, in fact, the uncle of Justina (see n. 98 above), Constantina may have deliberately sabotaged his eligibility by offering his daughter Justina to Magnentius; see n. 101 below). Presumably, Vulcacius Rufinus did play a supporting role, and Constantius subsequently appointed him Praetorian Prefect of Gaul.

Constantius and negotiated with Magnentius as well as Constantius.¹⁰⁰ Magnentius too negotiated with both rivals, while Constantius essentially negotiated with neither. Magnentius even proposed to marry Constantina and offered his daughter as Constantius' bride. Constantius could hardly allow his sister to marry an opponent,¹⁰¹ and chose instead to couple her to his new Caesar Gallus. Sources and scholars are divided on whether she was to keep an eye on him or whether Constantius was attempting to neutralize her by marrying her to an inexperienced Caesar. As it turned out, she neither neutralized Gallus nor was she herself neutralized by him. It is not impossible to suppose that Constantina employed Magnentius simply as a tool to eliminate Constans. That may explain an arrangement with Vetrano that included, at some point, a possibility that Constantius might ask for his empire back. While this could be seen as action in favour of Constantius, her later actions against his instructions suggest that Constantina was attempting to posture herself into a position of power as Augusta. Too little evidence survives to validate details, but with her support of Vetrano, Constantina was in a position to block her brother's path to Magnentius—unless he satisfied her ambitions first. Panegyrists make much of Constantius' ability to recover Illyricum by rhetoric,¹⁰² but their insistence hints at his weakness: after extorting her price, Constantina kept her collaborator safe and unsullied, while her brother's reputation was besmirched by the secret order for his men to appear under arms—perhaps on Constantina's advice. Thus, there is at least the possibility that Constantina plotted against her brothers. Perhaps she considered that her brothers, who were responsible for the death of her first husband, had lost her a throne. Perhaps also Constantius forced or bribed one of her attendants to cause, with some noxious substance or other, the high fever to which she succumbed on her way to meet her brother to plead for her husband.

When fleeing the forces of Magnentius, Constans followed what might be regarded as an odd choice of route. Since he was killed just outside the borders of Spain, he was clearly heading there. Would it not have been more sensible to get to the Mediterranean by the quickest route and cross

¹⁰⁰ On both the role of Constantina and Vetrano's position, see Drinkwater 2000: 149–158.

¹⁰¹ Was Magnentius' marriage to Justina a link to the imperial family offered by Constantina as a consolation prize to disguise her larger purpose?

¹⁰² See, for example, Them., *Or.* 2.37a–b; Julian, *Or.* 1.31c–32a, 2.76d–78c.

to Africa to seek the support of the legions there?¹⁰³ Perhaps he felt that travel down the Rhône was too dangerous, or perhaps he knew that too many of the soldiers in Gaul, Italy and (perhaps even) Illyricum had already been turned against him. The choice of escape route raises the spectre of Centcelles, which some have regarded as his final resting-place.¹⁰⁴ That debate is beyond the scope of this survey, but it is obvious why the connection was made: he died nearby and the mausoleum is richly appointed with Christian themes.¹⁰⁵

Of the usurpers following the death of Constans, only Magnentius was problematic. Nepotianus, his mother Eutropia and their senatorial supporters were eliminated at Rome in June 350 after a reign of a few weeks by agents of Magnentius.¹⁰⁶ To ensure that Vetranio, who had taken the purple on 1 March 350, did indeed keep the promise he made at some point to restore Illyricum to Constantius, the latter, on 25 December 350, invited the armies of both to an assembly, with a public order to appear without weapons and a private one to his own forces to retain their weapons and to surround Vetranio's men. Vetranio gave up without a fight; as noted, Constantina may well have stage-managed the whole business. Shortly thereafter, on 15 March at Sirmium, Constantius raised his cousin Flavius Constantius Gallus to the rank of Caesar, married him to Constantina and posted the pair of them to Antioch. It might be argued that Constantina traded Vetranio for Gallus and a throne. Some months later, on 28 September 351 at Mursa, Constantius encountered the forces

¹⁰³ Barnes 1993: 101, suggests that he was attempting to reach the Mediterranean to take ship to Italy. But Magnentius had support there, and thus Africa or the East (despite disharmony with Constantius) would seem to be more beneficial destinations. Drinkwater 2000: 136, suggests that the oddness of Constans' journey from Autun to Spain implies that his attempt to escape was deliberately managed by Magnentius in the hope that he would commit suicide in despair of rescue. If so, why was the path to Spain also not blocked?

¹⁰⁴ Too little is known about the occupants of the place and any potential connection with the imperial family to judge the validity of any suggestion that this was his initial destination or, indeed, his final one. Schlunk 1988 as cited by Remolá Vallverdú and Pérez Martínez 2013: 168, was apparently the first to suggest that the mausoleum was that of Constans. Any connection with Centcelles at this point also raises the issue of the "Spital Lady", possibly of Spanish origin; see n. 97 above.

¹⁰⁵ For a recent detailed treatment (arguing that the site was the *praetorium* of the *comes Hispaniarum* Asterius, c. 420), see Remolá Vallverdú and Pérez Martínez 2013: 161–186.

¹⁰⁶ Eutropia, half-sister of Constantine, had married (?) Vilius Nepotianus. Her son was presumably spared in 337 because he was not a descendant of Constantius in a direct male line or because he was too young to be a threat.

of Magnentius. It was a hard-fought contest, with a total of 50,000 slain. Constantius won the day but barely: he needed two winters and the campaigning season between to recover for the next offensive. Magnentius escaped to Gaul, where he prepared for the next round, fought in southern Gaul in 353; he lost and the usurpation came to its end, followed by the inevitable punishment of associates.

Not long thereafter, Constantius began the celebration of his *tricennialia* at Arles. His other surviving cousin, Julian, was ordered to attend and appears to have spent some time travelling on campaign with the court in the spring of 354.¹⁰⁷ By that point, the emperor had become unhappy with the activities of Gallus and Constantina at Antioch. He summoned Gallus and Constantina to attend a meeting at Milan. Constantina went ahead, to plead with her brother for her husband's life, but died of fever on the way.¹⁰⁸ The now reluctant Gallus was induced to undertake the journey by the false promise of promotion to the rank of Augustus. He was tried by high officials at Pola and defended himself by laying the blame on Constantina, but was sentenced to death and executed.¹⁰⁹ During this period, Constantius ordered Julian, who had left the court and was heading for his ancestral home in Bithynia, to travel to Athens instead. In 355, Julian was again summoned to the West and resided at Comum while the court was at Milan. When the manufactured conspiracy of Silvanus broke out in the late summer and autumn, Julian was again sent to Athens, whence he was summoned for his investiture as Caesar on 6 November 355 and his marriage to Helena. It seems likely that Constantius had been attempting for some time to persuade Julian to take on an imperial role without success. Now Julian was no longer given the choice. He and Gallus, when under the guardianship of Constantius, had spent six years in the 340s at the imperial estate at Macellum in Cappadocia. There, he was

¹⁰⁷For the interpretation of Julian's activities outlined in this paragraph, see Vanderspoel 2013.

¹⁰⁸She and Gallus had produced a daughter, whom Julian mentions (*Ep. ad Ath.* 273d), orphaned by the death of her mother and the execution of her father. Chausson 2007: 138–141, conjectures that she was named Anastasia and was the mother of a Gallus (*natus Anastasiae*) mentioned on an inscription (*ICUR*, 4122 = *ILCV* 1759) in St. Peter's Basilica.

¹⁰⁹Amm. Marc. 14.11.23, notes that Constantius became so enraged when Gallus laid blame on Constantina that he sent officials to inform Gallus that he had been sentenced to death. Zonar. 13.9.20, claims that Constantius subsequently changed his mind and that his *praepositus sacri cubiuli* Eusebius (*PLRE* 1: 302–303 (Eusebius 11)) made certain that executioners did not receive that information. On Eusebius see also the chapter by Tougher in this volume.

raised as a potential heir, for he learned to shoot and ride alongside the other elements of his education. Thus, by 355 Constantius had employed both cousins whom he had trained as princes to accommodate the possibility that he would not produce a son to assist and succeed him.

For 356 and 357, Constantius and Julian worked together to achieve some victories at the Rhine frontier.¹¹⁰ Subsequently, Constantius engaged in campaigns on the Danubian frontier before returning to face the Persians. He was less successful than he had been in the 340s.¹¹¹ In particular, the loss of Amida in 359 was a blow; in response, he ordered Julian to send some western military units to provide necessary assistance. Julian, who had been operating successfully in the West, used this request as an opportunity to be raised to the rank of Augustus by his troops. In February 360 at Paris, after a verbal and leaflet campaign, the soldiers acclaimed Julian as Augustus. Inevitably, he sent a letter of explanation to Constantius, claiming that he had had no choice, but at the same time refusing to lay down the title Augustus, thus putting himself in open revolt against his cousin.

In the summer of 360, while Constantius continued to concentrate on the dangers facing the East, Julian moved his forces to the Balkans, from where he engaged in a letter-writing campaign to impugn the behaviour of Constantius towards him and his family. He was clever enough not to leave the relative safety of the Balkans, even when Constantius, to his credit, continued to address problems at the eastern frontier in summer 361. In early autumn, Constantius headed westwards to address the challenge of Julian. He fell ill on the journey and died at Mopsucrenae on 3 November 361, after his baptism by Euzoius, the bishop of Antioch, and a declaration that Julian was to be his successor. At only forty-four years of age, he had been a member of the imperial college for thirty-seven years.

Thus ended the dynasty of Constantine, in terms of the tenure of imperial titles. A granddaughter, Constantius' daughter Constantia (born posthumously), was the wife of the later emperor Gratian, but no evidence survives to suggest she was ever Augusta.¹¹² The dynasty of Constantius I

¹¹⁰ Bowersock 1978 remains a concise biography of Julian that attempts to overcome the excesses of Julian's supporters and detractors, ancient and modern; his treatments of Julian's early Gallic campaigns and his usurpation were among the first to realize that Julianic propaganda had been absorbed uncritically by too many earlier scholars. See also Tougher 2007.

¹¹¹ For the sources see Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 211–230.

¹¹² Constantia had previously been displayed by the usurper Procopius to advertise a link to the previous dynasty of Constantine (Amm. Marc. 26.7.10). Valentinian and Gratian dedicated

would endure for another twenty months until June 363, when Julian was killed on campaign against the Persians. Constantius I and his descendants were constantly, if sometimes tendentiously, members of the imperial college from 293 to 363. In that space of seventy years, an impressive number of family members and associates by marriage held imperial titles as Caesar, Augustus and Augusta: Constantius I; Constantine; Crispus; Constantine II; Constantius II; Constans; Dalmatius; [Hannibalianus *rex*]; Gallus; Julian; Maximian, Maxentius; Licinius; Licinius Caesar; Helena; Fausta; Theodora; Constantina; [Constantia]. It had been a successful dynasty, of a length exceeded only by the Julio-Claudians, and possessed of an impressive, but nevertheless distasteful, penchant for internecine violence. And as the first Christian imperial family, it had changed the nature of the Roman empire and its government in a variety of ways. The subsequent chapters in this volume outline and examine many of these changes.

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(*AE* 1913.227) a bath complex in Calabria to their queens (*reginis suis*) on 27 June 374; the marriage thus presumably occurred in 374, when Constantia was twelve years of age. See Lenski 2002: 102–103, n. 210. Presumably she died *c.* 383, since her remains arrived at Constantinople on 31 August 383, according to the *Chronicon Paschale*. If she gave birth to a child or children, they have completely disappeared from the historical record.

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CHAPTER 3

Constantine II and His Brothers: The Civil War of AD 340

William Lewis

INTRODUCTION

The Constantinian dynasty was remarkable both for the scale of its domestic bloodshed and the success with which it was obscured. Of the fifteen male grandchildren of Constantius I, eleven were killed by members of their own family, and their fate was scrubbed from the historical record so effectively that we do not even know the names of five of them. Many of these conflicts, such as the deaths of Fausta and Crispus and the dynastic murders of AD 337, have attracted considerable attention. The death of Constantine II in 340, however, remains inexplicably neglected in English-language scholarship. Even in other languages, only Bruno Bleckmann and Paola Ombretta Cuneo have tackled the topic in any detail, the former focusing primarily on the background to the conflict which led to Constantine's death, and the latter approaching it from the peculiar

W. Lewis (✉)
Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
e-mail: LewisWG2@cardiff.ac.uk

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perspective of *Codex Palatinus Graecus* 117.¹ More typically, the conflict is passed over as a skirmish of minor importance, a footnote to the division of 337 or a preamble to the events of the 340s. However, this was a proper civil war, resulting in the death of an Augustus in battle. It was every bit as decisive as the civil wars between Constantine I and Licinius or Constantius II and Magnentius.² Its overlooked significance is due only to the lack of detailed source material. Although it can be established that Constantine II entered Northern Italy and was killed in an ambush set by his brother Constans' troops, the exact dates, causes, and wider implications of this conflict lie scattered through an array of imprecise and contradictory accounts. These events have traditionally been interpreted as a civil war over territory and authority instigated by Constantine II,³ but the sources indicate a more complex political context that led to Constantine II peacefully entering Constans' territory and Constans opportunistically attacking him. The purpose of this chapter is to relate this conflict to the division of the empire from which it arose, to challenge assumptions about Constantine II's and Constans' intentions, and to elucidate the place of this civil war in the Constantinian dynasty's history. The first section will examine the division of 337. It will argue that the new territories were not sovereign as is often assumed, but were regions of a united empire under a hierarchical imperial college. The second section will analyse the surviving accounts of the civil war and suggest what may be considered reliable or significant from the contradictory sources. The third section will focus on dates and distances to develop a tighter chronology that will be utilised to propose a new interpretation of the civil war of 340.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Constantine I died on 22 May 337, and nine potential rivals within the imperial family were subsequently murdered on Constantius' orders.⁴ Afterwards, Constantine I's three surviving sons met in Pannonia to negotiate the future of the empire. On 9 September 337 all three were declared

¹ Bleckmann 2003 and Cuneo 2012. See further below.

² On the civil wars after 340, see the chapter by Mark Humphries in this volume.

³ E.g. Gibbon 1994, vol. 1: 670–671 (orig. vol. 2, chap. 18); DiMaio 1988: 240 n. 61; Hunt 1998: 5; Bleckmann 2003: 244–250; Meijer 2004: 125–126; Potter 2004: 462; Harries 2012: 189; Maraval 2013: 42–44; Crawford 2016: 63–64; Humphries 2017: 1095–1097.

⁴ See especially Burgess 2008.

Augusti, their existing territories were confirmed, and the lands of the murdered Caesar, Dalmatius, were divided between Constantius and Constans.⁵ Constantius, the middle brother who had just turned twenty, took all the eastern dioceses from Thrace to Egypt, including Constantinople, and he inherited with them the Persian frontier, where renewed hostilities would prevent him from intervening in the West until the 350s. Constans, the youngest son (*c.* fourteen at the time), did well for himself with Italy, most of North Africa, and Illyricum, his territory thus including Rome and Athens.⁶ Constantine II, the eldest brother at twenty-one and senior Augustus gained little from Dalmatius' removal, keeping control of Gaul, Iberia, Britain, and Mauretania Tingitana.⁷

In fact, when reconstructions of Constantine I's succession plans are examined, it appears that Constantine II was badly short-changed. Heinrich Chantraine's analysis has been generally accepted, with Constantine I planning an imperial college of two Augusti (Constantine II and Constantius II) being served by two respective Caesars (Constans and Dalmatius).⁸ The plan went badly awry when Constantine I died unexpectedly and Constantius purged the family of suspected threats, including the Caesar Dalmatius. It must have been during the negotiations in Pannonia before the acclamation as Augusti that they agreed to elevate Constans to the supreme rank also. As a result, both Constantine II and Constantius had to cede territory that they would otherwise have kept for themselves, or ruled through a subordinate Caesar, so the motivation for this cannot have been territorial. Perhaps instead they were concerned with the threat posed by a marginalised Caesar, and more significantly his court and troops. Perhaps they could not reconcile the need for Constans to manage the Danube frontier, which would have been in Constantius' half of the empire, with his status as a western Caesar. Perhaps they were also conscious of the benefits of the juvenile Constans acting as a buffer between the older, more powerful brothers, and the balance of power that would be offered by having one Augustus per frontier army.⁹ Whatever

⁵ See Bleckmann 2003: 226–236.

⁶ Constans was probably born in 323, or possibly 320; see for instance Barnes 1982: 45.

⁷ For Constantine II's birthdate, see Barnes and Vanderspoel 1984: 175–176 n. 3.

⁸ Chantraine 1992, accepted by Barnes 2011: 165; Bleckmann 2003: 226 n. 3; Burgess 2008: 7–9.

⁹ The idea that Constans, even as an Augustus, was a minor under the guardianship of Constantine II is anachronistic, based on a questionable reading of Zos. 2.39: see Bleckmann 2003: 236–241, and Potter 2004: 688 n. 100.

their motivation, the details of its execution were contentious. Julian claims that Constantine II and Constans “quarrelled and fought with one another”, while Constantius steered well clear of the dispute.¹⁰ This can only be half true. That Constantine II should object to losing his richest provinces is unsurprising, but his quarrel cannot only have been with Constans; there is no way that the unplanned elevation of the youngest Caesar and the allotting to him of Constantine II’s provinces could have been achieved without the leverage of Constantius. Julian’s panegyric insistence on Constantius’ detachment from this dispute indicates, if anything, the opposite.

Constantine II’s sole consolation for the loss of direct control of the territories that went to Constans was that as the senior Augustus he could expect to wield a kind of supra-territorial authority comparable to that of Diocletian, who was able to exercise peripatetic rule throughout his colleagues’ territory.¹¹ Although the most recent division of the empire between Augusti—Constantine I and Licinius—had been hostile, Constantine I had resurrected the Diocletianic model with his sons as Caesars. The sons had their own, independent courts and administrative areas, but Constantine I remained in overall command and travelled throughout the empire to where he was most needed.¹² It is inconceivable that this model would not influence Constantine II’s approach to his new role as senior Augustus.

The precise terms of the division of 337–340 need further consideration. An incidental remark of Rufinus shows he believed Constantine II held authority over his brothers’ territory, as Constantius only “obtained sole control of the Eastern empire upon the death of his brother Constantine”.¹³ The contemporary evidence, addressed below, broadly supports this. However, it is first worth considering that in the everyday administration of the empire this seniority was rarely exercised. While Constantine II may have had theoretical authority, this was eroded by the practicality of autonomous territories. For a start, it is clear from the defence of the frontiers that the three territories maintained complete military independence. For example, after the death of Constantine I,

¹⁰ Julian., *Or.* 2.94b–95a; cf. *Or.* 1.19a–20a (all translations from Wright 1913–1923).

¹¹ For deference and obedience see Julian., *Caes.* 315a–b, and Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 39.29. For previous divisions of the empire, see Barnes 1982: 195–200.

¹² Barnes 1982: 198, 76–80.

¹³ Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.16, trans. Amidon 1997: 28.

Constantius campaigned in Pannonia before it was transferred to Constans in the redistribution of the empire, after which Constans alone protected this border.¹⁴ There is no evidence of any emperor crossing into another's territory in this period of co-rule, except for Constantine II's foray into Italy in 340, with its disastrous consequences.¹⁵

Likewise, the imperial revenues appear to have been kept separate. Julian claims Constantius' brothers "did nothing to make the war [with Persia] easier for [Constantius]", implying that each territory was expected to manage its own affairs with its own resources.¹⁶ Indeed, any other arrangement would be impracticable. The only way shared coffers could function would be either to gather taxes into a central treasury and then divide resources between the Augusti, or to have the Augusti pay each other whatever sums were necessary to correct regional disparities of revenue and expenditure. The former would require offices and infrastructures that should be attested but are not. The latter would require accurate and honest accounting. Both would be so open to abuse that we would expect each emperor to simply keep what they had anyway.

The coinage itself offers a reflection of both independence and collegiality. There is clear evidence of the three emperors sharing numismatic iconography. Burgess has suggested that the Helena and Theodora coins were an initiative of Constantine II.¹⁷ They were first minted in Trier, which produced the greatest numbers of these types, and the design was passed on to Constantius and Constans, who in turn produced the coins in Rome and Constantinople, so that the series was minted in the territories of all the new emperors.¹⁸ A more illuminating example is the posthumous coinage devised by Constantine II and Constantius to commemorate their father. Constantine II's mints produced billon featuring Constantine I in military dress with a globe and spear, with *DIVO CONSTANTINO P* on the obverse and the reverse legend *AETERNA PIETAS*.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Constantius began producing quadriga coins depicting Constantine I on a quadriga with a hand reaching down from heaven. Kent places these as

¹⁴ Burgess 2008: 33; Barnes 1983, *passim* (pace Arce 1982 and 1984).

¹⁵ For itineraries, see Barnes 1993: 218–225.

¹⁶ Julian., *Or.* 1.18c.

¹⁷ Burgess 2008: 22–23, followed by Woods 2011: 193.

¹⁸ Cf. Burgess 2008: 23. For discussions of the coins see also the chapters by John Vanderspoel and Shaun Tougher in this volume. For Constantinian coinage in general see the chapter by Eric R. Varner.

¹⁹ *RIC* 8: Trier 37; Lyons 1–3; Arles 17, 32, 40–41.

the first billon produced at all of Constantius' mints (with the exception of Constantinople, where it was produced later), while at Constantine II's mints they were produced only after the conclusions of the AETERNA PIETAS coins (although the two designs share a single mint mark at Arles, so it is possible they were simultaneously produced for a short time there).²⁰ It is clear, then, that Constantine II created his own posthumous coinage for Constantine I, which was never adopted by his colleagues, and subsequently adopted Constantius' quadriga coin as a replacement. Constantine II neither compelled his junior colleagues to produce his posthumous coins nor hesitated to adopt his younger brother's more striking design, while Constans, meanwhile, minted no coins commemorating his father at all. The overall picture, then, is of a voluntary iconographic interchange overlying functionally independent minting practices.

Administrative division can be argued for in purely practical terms. In the Diocletianic system, each province belonged to one of thirteen dioceses, and each province's governor (of varying rank) was under the authority of the diocese's *vicarius*, and the *vicarii* were in turn under the authority of the Praetorian Prefect.²¹ The empire was, in effect, modular. Its division did little to affect the hierarchies with which it was ruled. The practicality of this is reflected in the fact that this modularity began to extend to the prefectures in the 340s; the Praetorian Prefects had previously been attached to individual emperors, but with administrative division they began to be associated with four regional prefectures.²² As Potter outlines, regional autonomy was not beneficial for maximising the potential of the empire's resources, but division was politically and dynastically convenient.²³ He critically observes that this kind of division was preferable to the officials advising the new emperors, "who had no interest in answering to a distant authority" and preferred "concentrated power in regional offices".²⁴ The implications this has for the agency and motivation of the sons, especially the young Constans, must be kept in mind.

²⁰ At Constantius' mints: *RIC* 8: Heraclea 14; Constantinople 1, 39, 52; Nicomedia 4, 18, 25; Cyzicus 4, 19, 25, 30; Antioch 37, 39; Alexandria 4, 12, 22. At Constantine II's mints: *RIC* 8: Trier 44, 68; Lyons 12, 17; Arles 42.

²¹ For the Diocletianic system, see further the chapter by Daniëlle Sloopjes in this volume.

²² Barnes 1992: 251–252. For the Praetorian Prefects, see further the chapter by Caillan Davenport in this volume.

²³ Potter 2015: 43–44.

²⁴ Potter 2015: 44.

For Palanque, the definitive criteria for true division are pluralities of imperial courts and legislative authority.²⁵ That the three emperors had separate courts and that each issued legislation is indisputable. Palanque assumes that if there was more than one emperor issuing legislation, the empire must have had a divided jurisdiction.²⁶ This is a significant point, but evidence is required. While it is easy to show multiple emperors issuing legislation, it is much more difficult to prove that these laws applied only to individual territories and not to the empire as a whole. For the later division between Constantius II and Constans (340–350), this can be demonstrated with direct evidence for one emperor’s laws being invalid in the other emperor’s territory:

Emperors Constantius and Constans to the Senate of Caesena. In accordance with the statute of my brother Constantius, all the landholders of Italy shall provide the wine which is customarily furnished for use as cellar supplies. In order that this may be done the more easily, that quantity of money shall be contributed by all our Italians which the regulation of the most noble and illustrious Praetorian Prefect, Rufinus, our father and retainer, decreed must be given. Given on the eleventh day before the kalends of June at Milan in the year of the seventh consulship of Constantius Augustus and the third consulship of Constans Augustus.²⁷

This is the law from Constans to the Senate of Caesena on 22 May 346, although the date has been disputed. The alternative date to 346 is 354, as the consular date in the text is the oxymoronic seventh consulship of Constantius (354) and third of Constans (346).²⁸ It may be that the third consulship of Constans (abl. *Constante Augusto*) was confused with the third consulship of Gallus (abl. *Constantio Caesare*) putting it in 354, but mistaking Constantius’ fourth consulship for his seventh is simpler, and at any rate the mention of the Praetorian Prefect Rufinus places it in the years

²⁵ Palanque 1944: 49.

²⁶ Palanque 1944: 55.

²⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 11.1.6. Trans. adapted from Pharr 1952.

²⁸ For this date, *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.42 has been proposed as a *lex gemina*, despite bearing little relationship in content, as it was issued on 22 May 354 and was also addressed to the Senate of Caesena. However, if these laws are *leges geminae*, they must both date to 346 rather than 354 because of the mention of Rufinus and movements of Constans (see below). More likely they are simple coincidence. Cuneo 1997: 244–245, doubts they are *leges geminae* but concurs with a 354 date.

344–347.²⁹ Barnes abandons both consular numberings by emending the date to 353, since Constantius spent most of 354 in Gaul but was likely in Milan for 22 May 353.³⁰ However, Barnes rejects the 346 date only because he assumes that the law cited by *Cod. Theod.* 11.1.6 must have also applied specifically to the same “*Italiae possessors*”, meaning it was a reiteration of Constans’ Italian policy by Constantius when he took over in the 350s. However, this assumption is not merited, as the reference could equally mean that Italian landowners were to be subject to the same rules as eastern ones, and the 353 date requires the emendation of no less than *seven* different names, numbers and titles, not only in the heading and subscription but also in the text itself (e.g. “*Constantii fratris*” to “*Constantis fratris*”). The 346 date requires only the emendation of one consular numbering to be internally coherent and historically plausible. The clinching proof of the 346 date is that it was addressed to the Senate of Caesena on 22 May imposing a wine levy. The following day Constans is indeed attested in Caesena in *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.38, which coheres with his reputation for speedy travel, and where he presumably made use of the requested wine.³¹

The law then attests to legislative division in 346. Though it was issued in the name of both surviving emperors, Constans ordered that “in accordance with the statute of my brother Constantius (*iuxta statutum Constantii fratris mei*), all the landholders in Italy shall provide the wine which is customarily furnished for use as cellar supplies”. This demonstrates a significant point: that a statute implemented by Constantius required separate endorsement to be valid in Constans’ share of the empire. The referencing of Constantius’ law—given the general scarcity of cross-referenced laws in the *Theodosian Code*—is probably because Constans was using the authority of a (for once) concordant imperial college to justify his wine levy. Although the death of Constantine II and the deterioration of relations between Constans and Constantius in the 340s may have changed the character of the division, it is unlikely that anything as constitutionally critical as regional legislative independence was a novel development.

²⁹ *PLRE* 1: 782–783 (Vulcacius Rufinus 25); Rufinus was in Gaul for the alternative date of 354.

³⁰ Barnes 1993: 314 n. 31.

³¹ *Lib., Or.* 59.147–148.

Regional autonomy is reflected in Eusebius' metaphorical language in the contemporaneous *Life of Constantine*: the division of the empire is characterised as the inheritance of property, and it is made clear that the empire is not passing into joint custody but being divided into shares as though Constantine was "disposing a patrimony".³² In practical terms the division of 337 did indeed create three largely autonomous territories, with their own military, financial, administrative, and legislative structures. However, de facto autonomy should not be equated with sovereignty. Division of territory did not mean division of the imperial college. Julian later observed, when recounting the disputes of 337, that:

If the emperor [Constantius] had disputed about boundaries and taken a hostile attitude, he might have obtained more than he did, but he would have governed only his allotted share. But he scorned and despised such trifles, and the result was that he really governed the whole world in partnership with his brothers, but had the care of his portion only.³³

Julian massages the role of Constantius here, but he is not making a propagandistic statement of unity, given the context is critical of the other brothers' disputes. On the contrary, it is a rare example of how division was conceptualised by those who lived through it. Julian posits the possibility of an uncooperative division, with each emperor's authority confined to their own territory, but what he recalls is something subtly different. The emperors might confine themselves to territories, but they governed in partnership. There was then a functional imperial college that acted as a supra-territorial ruling body.

The key to understanding the dynamics of this body is the question of seniority, and whether Constantine II's greater age and longer membership of the imperial college was to give him authority over his brothers and their territories. Certainly Constantine II embraced the affirmative. The coins he minted in Trier "stressed his seniority emphatically", as Kent puts it; "his effigy alone breaks the obverse legend, and he alone wears a laureled and jewelled diadem".³⁴ This has particular significance in light of the

³² Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.51, trans. Cameron and Hall 1999: 172. Eusebius strategically attributes this ad hoc division to Constantine I.

³³ Julian., *Or.* 1.20a.

³⁴ Kent 1981: 125.

symbolism attached to the diadem by the Constantinian dynasty.³⁵ By maintaining this distinction, Constantine II sought to elevate himself while emphasising his brothers' subordination.

Inscriptions also suggest that Constantine II's seniority was going to be one of the defining features of the new imperial college. The following is from a statue base from Augusta Traiana, in Constantius' Scythian territory:

To the champion of peace and chorus leader of all good fortune, who renewed all victories from West to East without bloodshed, who guarantees the friendship of the emperors and eternal Augusti, Flavius Constantinus, the most powerful. The council and the people of the Traianeans [set this up] when Flavius Palladius, of perfectissimus rank, was governor (*praeses*) [of the province of Thrace].³⁶

The plurality of Augusti and the honouring of a Flavius Constantinus clearly date this inscription to the period 337–340, which roughly coheres with the tenure of Palladius who is elsewhere attested as governor of Thrace in 341.³⁷ It acknowledges Constantine II's pre-eminence, casting him in the role of “chorus leader” and explicitly calling him “the most powerful”, with (ironically) the implied authority to guarantee the brothers' friendship. It also ascribes to him “all victories from West to East”, crediting him with overall responsibility for victories won in his brothers' territories.³⁸

The imperial hierarchy can also be deduced from this Cypriot milestone:

D(ominis) N(ostris)
[Fl(avio)] Cl(audio) Constantino
[ma]ximo triumfatori Aug(usto)

³⁵ MacCormack 1981: 188–190; Dearn 2003: 182. Note the association of the diadem with the rank of Augustus in Amm. Marc. 20.4.17–18 and 21.1.4.

³⁶ Translation, provenance, and discussion in LSA 1665 (Gehn).

³⁷ Pace Tantillo 1999, who makes an unconvincing case for the subject being Constantine I.

³⁸ This should be held as distinct from the Tetrarchic practice (which lapsed under Constantine I) of victory titles being shared by all members of the imperial college (McCormick 1986: 112–113; Hebblewhite 2017: 56–58). This inscription does not concern victory titles, which by this point were largely individual and were never appropriated by Constantine II, but rather the attribution of responsibility for successes in the empire. It is much the same as when Constantius claimed credit for the battle of Strasbourg in 357, and Julian resentfully described it as a matter of duty that he sent Chnodomar to Constantius instead of parading his captive himself (Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 279c–d).

[ac Fl(avio)] Constantio
 [ac Fl(avio)] Constanti
 [v]ictoribus
 semper Aug(ustis)
 mi(lia passuum) III³⁹

Cuneo reproduces this inscription from the time of the sons together with two from the reign of Constantine I.⁴⁰ In the earlier inscriptions Constantine I takes first place with distinct honorific titles. In this later inscription Constantine II now takes first place with very similar and equally distinct honorifics, and his title “Augustus” also appears separately from his colleagues’ (where a single plural use for all three would suffice) in apparent imitation of Constantine I’s title appearing separately from the plural title of his Caesars. These inscriptions show Constantine II replacing his father as the preeminent figure in the college, with his brothers in subordinate positions despite being fellow Augusti.⁴¹

A distinctive case is in evidence on a milestone from Dedeçam in Anatolia, where an original inscription from the reign of Constantine I (left) was altered after his death (right)⁴²:

DD NN
 Fl [[Val]] Constantino max
 [[vict et Fl Cl Constant]]ino
 et Fl Iul Constantio et Fl
 Cl Constante
 [[Nobbb Caesss]] (*vel sim*)
 ab Antiochia
 mi p V

DD NN
 Fl <<Cl>> Constantino max
 << (vac.) imo>>
 et Fl Iul Constantio et Fl
 Cl Constante
 <<victoris semp>>
 ab Antiochia Augg
 mi p V

The simplest way to modify this inscription would have been to change the plural title from Caesars to Augusti, and either erase the name of Constantine I or alter it to an appropriate posthumous reference. Instead, the name of Constantine I has been altered (Val. to Cl.) so that it now

³⁹ Mitford 1939: 187; Cuneo 2012: 65. I have chosen not to discuss another, fragmentary, Cypriot inscription (*CIL* 3 Supp. 6732) reproduced in Cuneo 2012: 69, from Mitford 1939: 189, as points that could be made from it would rest on an extensively reconstructed text.

⁴⁰ Cuneo 2012: 65–66.

⁴¹ Cf. Chastagnol 1976: 262–264, for a similar case in Constantine II’s territory.

⁴² Milestone 94A, text 6, in French 2012: 158–159.

refers to Constantine II, while Constantine II's old name was erased with the last three letters altered to expand the victory title to *max|imo*. As in the Cypriot inscription, Constantine II takes the place of his father at the head of the college, separate from his colleagues with distinct titles as a signifier of his leadership. These inscriptions are admittedly unusual—most from the period 337–340 simply list the three Augusti with the same titles—but their existence shows that there were people who understood the imperial college to be hierarchical, with Constantine II taking over the dominant role of his father.

What is even more interesting is that these inscriptions were all erected in Constantius II's territory. The perception of Constantine II's supremacy was not limited to within his own borders, and there is a clear pattern of recognition in other parts of the empire. If officials under Constantius could openly celebrate Constantine II's seniority, then this must have been an acknowledged fact of government. Whether Constans and Constantius were entirely happy with this arrangement is another matter; their coinage might suggest not. While Constantine II remained senior Augustus, his brothers' coins increasingly aggrandised their own reigns.⁴³ A rare *faustaureus* and *solidus* type minted by Constans in Siscia subtly re-ordered the imperial hierarchy. On the reverse, the three Augusti are depicted with the outer two looking inwards towards the central figure, who is seated above the rest with a halo in a clear position of predominance. Although the central figure is not identified by name, VOT V is inscribed on the plinth on which he is seated, strongly implying this figure is meant to be Constans.⁴⁴ Although Constans celebrated his fifth anniversary of rule in the last week of 337 (counting inclusively), it is likely the coin is of a later date. Kent puts it in a second period of minting after the succession, and as the mintmark SIS* remained in use even after the death of Constantine II, it may belong to the period leading up to the civil war, although precise dating is impossible. It should be noted that *solidi*, and especially multiples, were not a means of mass communication. They were high-value and low-volume coins: these examples offer insight into Constans' court rather than being a public statement of policy. However, if Constans had begun to re-evaluate his place in the hierarchy, this has significance for our interpretation of the civil war of 340.

⁴³ Bruun 1987: 194, suggests Constans and Constantius used coinage to “upgrade their own imperial rank” to equal that of Constantine II.

⁴⁴ RIC 8: Siscia 18 and 18A; Börm 2015: 254 n. 86.

One of the few known controversies from the period suggests that Constantine II did not perceive his seniority as nominal, but began to exercise it as soon as his father died. Prior to the sons' formal acclamation as Augusti in 337, Constantine II restored Athanasius to his Alexandrian see in Constantius' territory, claiming that he was fulfilling the wishes of his deceased father.⁴⁵ Constantine II's assertion that he had personally inherited the intention from Constantine I was thus a clear claim to his father's policies. This was almost certainly unwelcome. Constantine II's intervention in his brother's territory was worrying in itself, both as an act and as a precedent. The Alexandrian bishopric was an influential position in an often-unstable city whose grain shipments were vital to the security of the East. Having a bishop sent from Trier by a western emperor presented an alarming conflict of loyalties, and on this basis alone it is unsurprising that the emperor of the East ejected Athanasius only two years later, and would oppose his episcopacy for the rest of his life.⁴⁶

There is evidence in the *Theodosian Code* that Constantine II interfered with Constans' territory as well. Constans had already issued laws to Africa on the subject of municipal duties, and there are three extant examples addressed to the *vicarius* Aconius Catullinus, with the first received on 16 May 338 (6.22.2),⁴⁷ the second on 12 December 338 (12.1.24), and the third given on 1 November 338 (12.1.26). Less than a month after *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.24, the following law on the same subject was sent to Carthage:

The same Augusti to our dearest Celsinus, greetings (*idem AA. have Celsine k(arissime) n(o)b(is)*). You have greatly protested the thinness of the most splendid Senate of Carthage and the paltry *curiales* to remain, while they all trade the marks of undue rank for the disgraceful ruin of their family fortune. Therefore, such men shall be stripped of their imaginary honours, of whatever kind that they have obtained, and shall be made liable to compulsory municipal services. This regulation, indeed, must be observed most carefully throughout all Africa (*quod quidem per omnem Africam sollertissime servari oportet*). Given on the sixth day before the ides of January at Trier in the second consulship of Constantius Augustus and first of Constans Augustus.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Athanasius, *Apology against the Arians* 87.4–7, and *History of the Arians* 8.1; Soc., *Hist. eccl.* 2.3; Barnes 1993: 34.

⁴⁶ Athanasius, *History of the Arians* 19.3–4.

⁴⁷ I have restored the MS date of receipt for *Cod. Theod.* 6.22.2 from Mommsen's emendation to 16 December 338, due to the distances travelled and the questionable relationship of 6.22.2 to 12.1.24.

⁴⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27, 8 January 339.

The *Code* attributes this law to “the same Augusti”—i.e. Constantius and Constans in this context—but the subscription records that it was issued from Trier. Misattributions are extremely common in the *Code*, especially when the compilers had to deal with several emperors ruling simultaneously, one of whom was expunged from official history. The surviving subscriptions are generally more accurate indicators. If it was sent from Trier in 339, then it must have been sent by Constantine II. And it was addressed to Carthage—right in the heart of Constans’ African territory.

The security of this attribution has been questioned.⁴⁹ Maraval has doubts on the basis of its uniqueness, being the only law subscribed from Trier in these years and the only law that seemed to interfere in another emperor’s territory.⁵⁰ Bleckmann questions how a law of Constantine II could have found its way into the *Code* after the memory sanctions against him.⁵¹ These objections are easily dismissed. While there is undoubtedly suppression of Constantine II in the *Code*, evident from the many laws issued in the names of Constantius and Constans which would have originally named the third colleague,⁵² this is unlikely to be the result of the compilers respecting memory sanctions that had been obsolete since the 350s. Rather than a calculated programme of erasure, it is far more likely to have been a simple time-saving measure to sidestep an obscure family conflict. To judge from their poor record of distinguishing between Constans and Constantius, the compilers did not have the clearest picture of the divided empire and seem to have applied more guesswork than method. In these circumstances, we would expect laws of Constantine II to have been incorporated under his brothers’ names, with only the sporadic mentions of places of issuance to identify them as his.⁵³ And indeed, there is a law from 12 December 337, attributed to Constantius II in the *Theodosian Code* but issued to the *praeses* of Baetica in Constantine II’s territory.⁵⁴ This is almost certainly another law of Constantine II obscured by the compilers’ attribution conventions, and proves that records of Constantine II’s laws had not been eradicated by the fifth century. So the only impediment to accepting the authenticity of this law is the seeming

⁴⁹ For an astute but cautious commentary, see Cuneo 1997: 29–30.

⁵⁰ Maraval 2013: 42–43.

⁵¹ Bleckmann 2003: 239.

⁵² Corcoran 2015.

⁵³ Indeed, far from Constantine II being eradicated from the *Code*, this chapter will argue below that *Cod. Theod.* 2.6.5 and 10.15.3 are also attributable to him.

⁵⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 11.9.2; Cuneo 2012: 93–94.

contradiction between an empire with regional legislative autonomy and a senior Augustus writing rescripts to his brother's proconsul. However, the contradiction is illusory. Regional legislative autonomy was a by-product of administrative division, due to the petition-and-response nature of imperial rule. Who had the authority to issue that legislation is an entirely separate question. If, as the evidence so far suggests, Constantine II took his authority as senior Augustus to be analogous to that of other domineering leaders, then the occasional display of overarching authority is unsurprising. In issuing legislation to Africa under Constans he was following a very close precedent of Diocletian himself, who had also sent legislation to a proconsul of Africa when that territory belonged to another Augustus.⁵⁵

There remains the question of why Celsinus would petition Constantine II rather than Constans. It is unlikely that previous petitions to Constans had been ignored, as there had already been two laws from him to Catullinus, then *vicarius* of Africa, on this very topic (see above). Whether Celsinus had less success accessing Constans than Catullinus is an open question; he received a law from him on 12 June 338, but this may have arrived after he had sent his original petition to Constantine II, and Constans' use of "*edictum*" in this law suggests it was not a rescript in response to a petition from Celsinus anyway.⁵⁶ Perhaps Celsinus considered the court of Constantine II to be more proactive in dealing with such requests? Our revised view of the division of 337, however, provides a simpler explanation. Officials like Celsinus, seeing the sons as a continuation of the government of Constantine I, were unlikely to think of the emperors' territories as closed systems. Just because an official was prospering under one emperor, there was no reason why their ambition for more prestigious offices should be territorially limited. For example, in the 340s Ulpian Limenius served as proconsul of Constantinople under Constantius, but must have kept on good terms with Constans as he soon became Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Urban Prefect of Rome.⁵⁷ A similar career path was followed by Vulcacius Rufinus and probably also Marcus Maecius Memmius Furius Baburius Caecilianus Placidus.⁵⁸ It is easy to

⁵⁵ *Collatio Mosaicarum* 15.3, trans. in Gardner and Lieu 2004: 116–118; Corcoran 2000: 135–136.

⁵⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 10.10.4.

⁵⁷ *PLRE* 1: 510 (Ulpian Limenius 2).

⁵⁸ *PLRE* 1: 782–783 (Vulcacius Rufinus 25); 705 (Placidus 2).

imagine why Celsinus might use an issue like the desertion of the municipal councils, on which imperial policy was clear, as an excuse to stay on good terms with Trier. In this case, Celsinus was able to write the sort of letter that merited a reply with the rare honorific “*have Celsine k(arissime) n(o)b(is)*”. This construction is used only eighteen times in the entirety of the *Code*, which suggests that Celsinus was cultivating a good relationship with the senior Augustus, and was perhaps motivated to contact him for political or career reasons rather than because of a burning interest in the state of local politics. Celsinus’ later defection to Magnentius is certainly suggestive of an opportunistic mind.

An important aspect of this rescript is that Celsinus evidently thought it unproblematic to write to Constantine II rather than Constans on a matter concerning Constans’ territory. This carries two important implications. First, Celsinus thought that the senior Augustus possessed the authority to legislate over the territories of other Augusti, and the fact that Constantine II replied suggests he agreed. The second is that Celsinus did not think that approaching the senior Augustus rather than Constans would be a breach of imperial etiquette under the terms of 337. We can assume this as Celsinus stood to gain nothing from creating an awkward situation in the imperial college, and indeed he continued to be held in high esteem by Constans regardless of writing to Constantine II, being appointed as Urban Prefect of Rome in the reshuffle after the civil war, replacing Fabius Titianus who was made Praetorian Prefect of Gaul.⁵⁹ Chastagnol proposes that after the death of Constantine II, Celsinus “s’est rallié rapidement à Constant”, but such an assumption is only necessary if *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27 is taken to be a subversion of the arrangements of 337, whereas in fact it is a manifestation of them.⁶⁰

There is another aspect to this law: *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27 notes that it “must be observed most carefully throughout all Africa”. Whoever drafted this law expected their emperor to have an interest in the entirety of Constans’ African territory, rather than just answering an official within it, and Constantine II himself had no problem approving this. It is possible, perhaps likely, that Constantine II’s reply was circulated far more widely than just to Celsinus. In short, Constantine II was not content to rest on his laurels as the nominally senior Augustus but wanted to use his position to oversee his brothers’ administration of their territories. Along with

⁵⁹ *PLRE* 1: 192 (Aurelius Celsinus 4); 918–919 (Fabius Titianus 6).

⁶⁰ Chastagnol 1962: 114.

Athanasius' restoration and the promotion of his seniority, *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27 fits a pattern of behaviour that must have seemed perfectly reasonable to one in Constantine II's elevated position, while perhaps seeming overbearing to someone like Constans whose high office had not always been guaranteed.

Some concluding points for this section. The period between Constantine I's death and the civil war of 340 is poorly attested. The limited evidence has led to the assumption that the division of 337 was much like the tense and uncooperative division of 340–350, or the autonomous and hostile division between Constantine I and Licinius. If this was true, then Constantine II entering Constans' territory could have been taken as a *de facto* declaration of war, much as violation of sovereignty was used as a justification for Constantine I and Licinius' civil war.⁶¹ However, while Constantine I and Licinius were already hostile, having fought one civil war with both sides spoiling for another, all the evidence from 337–340 suggests a different picture. While the empire was divided in practical function (i.e. legislatively, financially, administratively, and militarily), the imperial college was united. Officials like Palladius and Celsinus, from diverse parts of the empire, regarded themselves as subjects not of their local Augustus but of an imperial college of three, with Constantine II as its most senior member. In the day-to-day running of the empire, this is unlikely to have manifested itself at all, as the practicalities of the division promoted direct regional rule. But instances such as the restoration of Athanasius, the rescript to Celsinus, and the inscription from Augusta Traiana show that beneath this was a functional hierarchy. However, the ejection of Athanasius and the shift in coin iconography suggest that this hierarchy had begun to be undermined, and in such a climate it is possible Constantine II was looking for ways to reassert his primacy.

THE SOURCES FOR THE CIVIL WAR OF 340

The sources for the immediate causes of the civil war and its prosecution are lacking in detail and spread over a wide period. This section will address them in roughly chronological order (with the exception of the sources based on Philostorgius which will be discussed together towards the end), and will begin with the *Theodosian Code*.

⁶¹ *Anonymous Valesianus* 5.21; Barnes 2011: 106.

The most proximate law to events was addressed to Petronius, the new *vicarius* of Africa, and was issued in or near Aquileia on 9 April 340.⁶² The actual content of this law concerned the fisc, and tells us little about what must have been going on at the time, but it attests an imperial presence in Aquileia on 9 April, which will be important to the chronology. Another law from twenty days later tells us rather more:

Emperor Constantius [*sic*] Augustus to Marcellinus. The public enemy and our own enemy (*publicus ac noster inimicus*) had rendered to diverse people exemption from capitation taxes and removed tax declarations. We therefore command that these privileges shall be completely withdrawn from all persons. Given on the third day before the kalends of May in the consulship of Acindynus and Proculus.⁶³

The attribution of this law to Constantius is an error; given the addressee and subject, the author can only be Constans (although it was likely issued in the name of Constantius also). The “*publicus ac noster inimicus*” can only be Constantine II; there were no other public and personal enemies in the West who could have recently granted tax exemptions, and laws revisiting the acts of fallen rivals are not unusual.⁶⁴ This is clearly part of Constans’ consolidation of the western provinces, which were incorporated into his territories after the death of Constantine II and the sanctions against his memory.⁶⁵ Constantine II’s supporters were undermined by the revocation of their tax privileges, and it is likely Constans replaced Constantine II’s key administrators. Given the competition for offices and the fact that Constans was probably only seventeen in 340, one might expect his court to have used all their influence to rid themselves of rivals. There has been speculation that the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul at the time was Ambrosius, the father of the famous bishop of Milan, and that his death was precipitated by the war in 340, which is far from certain but an attractive theory.⁶⁶ The constitution’s addressee, Marcellinus, was initially responsible for this takeover. However, Marcellinus’ prefecture lasted for

⁶² There are in fact two laws from Aquileia to Petronius on 9 April, *Cod. Theod.* 2.6.5 and 10.15.3, but they are almost certainly *leges geminae*—a single law split between different sections of the *Code* (see *Cod. Theod.* 1.1.5–6).

⁶³ *Cod. Theod.* 11.12.1, 29 April 340.

⁶⁴ E.g. *Cod. Theod.* 5.8.1, 8.4.1, 15.14.1–4.

⁶⁵ For memory sanctions, see Cahn 1987.

⁶⁶ *PLRE* 1: 51 (Ambrosius 1); Barnes 1980: 161 n. 5.

only one more year, and after the end of his tenure Constans made Constantine II's former territory into its own prefecture, appointing Fabius Titianus to the role in 341.⁶⁷ Indeed, Titianus (Urban Prefect of Rome at the time) had attended Constans very soon after *Cod. Theod.* 11.12.1, from 5 May to 10 June 340, perhaps to determine the administrative future of the West.⁶⁸ As well as hinting at the aftermath of Constantine II's death, *Cod. Theod.* 11.12.1 also supplies a firm *terminus ante quem*: 29 April 340.

Our earliest retrospective reference to the conflict is to be found in a panegyric of Libanius, dating to *c.* 344–346/7 when the battle of Singara was still topical, and addressed jointly to Constantius and Constans:

For in former times a spirit of envy had become attached to all emperors, and those who possessed the inferior provinces would plot against those who had obtained the more important ones, while those who benefited from the important ones would begrudge those who drew small profits even their inferior positions. But in fact the equal shares of the overall command fed the disorder to an even greater extent, and the law of nature had been judged second to the desire for dominion, and everything related was filled with frenzy against itself. Indeed the greatest of disasters are commemorated as having occurred in the case of emperors ... But now all the ancient time has been reversed, and every spiteful eye of envy has been expelled, and an unbreakable bond of friendship unites the souls of the emperors. Their government has been divided by area but is held together by goodwill, and the title of their kinship is confirmed by their deeds.⁶⁹

This passage can only refer to the civil war of 340.⁷⁰ It is deliberately ambiguous and could technically refer to any number of historical conflicts, but its position in the closing section of the speech, after the parts addressing Constantius and Constans separately, and its introduction as “the most important” of matters makes the allusion clear. Moreover, the way this reference is set is in opposition to Constantius and Constans' relationship and thereby invites the comparison with Constantine II and Constans' relationship. Few contemporary listeners would have thought

⁶⁷ After 25 February 341 and before 24 June 341: *PLRE* 1: 918–919 (Fabius Titianus 6).

⁶⁸ *Chron. min.* 1.68; Chastagnol 1962: 109.

⁶⁹ *Lib., Or.* 59.151–152, trans. Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 200. On the oration and the imperial ideology reflected in it see also the chapter by Christine Greenlee in this volume.

⁷⁰ I thank Nicholas Baker-Brian for this reading. It has since been noted by Woudhuysen 2018: 178 n. 114.

of (for example) Constantine I and Licinius here rather than Constantine II and Constans.

The use of the civil war to discuss imperial unity also fits well with what is known of the political background to this panegyric. Constantius and Constans' relationship was not as harmonious as Libanius tries to make out, and his speech was likely written around the time of Constans' infamous threat to restore Athanasius and Paul by force of arms in 345. Constantius would have wanted to avoid a confrontation with the now-unified West while having to defend his eastern border with Persia, and Libanius was likely approached to help heal divisions that were looking increasingly dangerous. Indeed, in a discreetly prickly introduction, Libanius takes pains to illustrate the precise circumstances surrounding the composition of *Oration* 59. While he diligently claims to be "prompted by nobody" and "roused to a panegyric by the merits of the case" (*Or.* 59.1), he then adds that while "still contemplating the matter the injunction confronted me and my intention and the request concurred" (*Or.* 59.4). He also complains about the difficulty of praising both emperors and mentions that "the proposer of the contest showed equal love for both men and did not consider our powers rather than how on the one occasion both emperors might be included" (*Or.* 59.6). *Oration* 59, then, was prompted by the imperial authorities of the East (most likely by the Praetorian Prefect Philippus),⁷¹ and Libanius was specifically instructed to write a panegyric jointly addressed to both emperors. Given the timing of this oration, and the inclusion of Constans in a speech celebrating the battle of Singara, it was clearly requested as an attempt to deescalate Constans' increasingly belligerent rhetoric.

Elements of this highly charged political background are controversial, particularly due to the uncertainty of the speech's date, but none affect the value of this passage as evidence. Any imperial panegyric would take pains to reproduce faithfully the "official line" on controversial matters, especially when there was official input in the planning stages of the speech. Libanius would have chosen his words very carefully when referencing the sensitive events of 340, and if he was in any doubt as to his brief, he would have skirted the issue entirely. Constantine II, by this point, had long been subject to memory sanctions, which Constantius had also imposed in the East.⁷² This did not preclude all mention of Constantine II; on the

⁷¹ Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 162.

⁷² Cahn 1987; Barnes 1993: 253–254 n. 18.

contrary, memory sanctions (also known by the neologism “*damnatio memoriae*”) were not so much an attempt to erase history as to reshape it.⁷³ References to condemned figures were not uncommon in panegyrics, and by making creative use of the officially sanctioned narrative—in this case contextualising the civil war of 340 within a posited tradition of envious co-rulers—the panegyrist could demonstrate their commitment to the imperial version of history. Here, Libanius is carefully showing that he can refer to the most sensitive of events subtly, and that he can skilfully handle the controversies attendant on an imperial panegyrist. Libanius would have ensured then that this part of the speech concurred with Constans’ explanation of the civil war of 340.

Libanius’ allusion arguably demonstrates that the story of territorial jealousy had its origins in the western court. There was no point in writing a speech extolling unity between Constantius and Constans if Libanius was going to mishandle the civil war, and the eastern officials behind his speech would certainly have known how the western court wanted the events of 340 to be portrayed. Many of the later sources continue the tradition of characterising 340 as a war over territory instigated by Constantine II; while we might have suspected them to be a legacy of Constans’ version of history, it is a significant advance to be able to prove it. The explanation originated in the 340s. It was the version of events sanctioned by the surviving emperors. It appears in an imperially commissioned panegyric addressed to Constans. As such, we can now be certain that this explanation and its subsequent iterations reflected the version of events disseminated by Constans and the western court.

The secondary accounts from the latter half of the fourth century, all of which used the *Kaisergeschichte*, tell us very little.⁷⁴ Aurelius Victor mentions the “fateful war” occurring “three years later, more or less” after the death of Dalmatius in 337.⁷⁵ Eutropius and Jerome record only that Constantine II was killed waging war on his brother near Aquileia, the former adding that he had rashly entered an engagement and the latter adding that he was slain by the river Elsa.⁷⁶ The anonymous *Épitome de*

⁷³ Hedrick 2000: xii; Flower 2006: xix, 5–6; Omissi 2016: 170–175.

⁷⁴ See especially Burgess 1995, *passim*. The literary work (*Codex Palatinus Graecus*) judged by Cuneo 2012 to be the funeral oration of Constantine II contains too many anomalous features to be a genuine imperial eulogy.

⁷⁵ Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 41.22, trans. Bird 1994: 51. Although the death of Dalmatius and Constantine II are juxtaposed, Aurelius Victor draws no connection between the two.

⁷⁶ Eutr. 10.9; Jer., *Chron.* s.a. 340.

Caesaribus adds two new details. The first is that Constantine II was not only killed near the Elsa but was also thrown in it, and the second is that the war was “on account of the legal right to Italy and Africa”, echoing Constans’ version of events.⁷⁷ Associating the dispute with both Italy and Africa (which is also a feature of Zosimus’ account) is worth considering further briefly. It may be that Constans’ story claimed Constantine II intended to seize just Italy and Africa rather than overthrow him entirely. But it is more likely that the *Epitome* and Zosimus assumed, erroneously, that because Constantine II had entered Italy, he wished to claim it as his own territory, and Africa along with it. The administration of Italy and Africa as a single prefecture was anachronistic in the period 337–340,⁷⁸ but later authors would have been long accustomed to this conjunction, and associating Africa with Italy would have been a natural assumption.

The fifth-century sources Rufinus, Orosius, Socrates, and Sozomen all add nothing particularly useful.⁷⁹ However, Zosimus (writing probably in the early sixth century), as well as echoing the *Epitome de Caesaribus* on Italy and Africa, accounts for Constantine II’s death with a strikingly different version of events:

Meanwhile, Constantine and Constans had a dispute about Carthaginian Africa and about Italy. Constans wanted to catch his brother off guard, so he concealed his hatred for three years. He waited until Constantine had entered a province which was loyal to himself, then sent soldiers, as if to assist him in the war against the Persians, but in reality to attack him unawares. Accordingly Constantine was murdered.⁸⁰

In Zosimus, Constantine II does not invade a sovereign territory but rather enters a province which happened to be loyal to Constans, who took the opportunity to kill his brother in a premeditated ambush. The comment on the Persians is problematic. Constans could hardly have sent troops northwest under the pretext of helping with a war being conducted by Constantius in the East. This can be explained by an earlier passage (2.39) where Zosimus betrays his ignorance of how the West was divided

⁷⁷ *Epit. de Caes.* 41.21, trans. Banchich 2009: 41.

⁷⁸ Barnes 1992: 252.

⁷⁹ Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.16; Oros. 7.29; Soc., *Hist. eccl.* 2.5; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.2. Sozomen claims Constantine II was killed by his generals, which seems to be an error rather than an alternative tradition in the sources, as related works directly contradict it.

⁸⁰ Zos. 2.41, trans. Ridley 1982: 41–42.

between Constantine II and Constans, and Bleckmann suggests the possibility that it was in fact Constantine II who used sending troops to aid Constantius as a justification for entering Constans' territory.⁸¹ Perhaps Constantine II did indeed intend to visit the eastern frontier, or perhaps Zosimus altered a now-lost element of the story to fit his geographical misunderstanding, or maybe he simply inserted a fictional Persian pretext to add colour to his narrative. However, although this part of Zosimus' account is confused, his casting of Constans as the aggressor certainly has some merit. Whatever Constantine II was doing in northern Italy in 340, Constans made the decision to engage him there with force, and (as shall be argued below) he did so with very little *ius ad bellum*. After Zosimus there is a rather long period of silence, until Symeon Magister, or Symeon Logothetes,⁸² wrote a short account in the tenth century, which emphasises mutual suspicion and bellicose advisors as causal factors.⁸³

This discussion of sources has made three important omissions—Photius, the *Passion of Artemius*, and Zonaras—which are best discussed together since they all commonly derive from the non-extant church history of Philostorgius (likely written in the 440s, or possibly the 430s). The least detailed is the epitome written by Photius in the ninth century, preserving little about the episode except—like Zosimus—the claim that Constans was plotting against Constantine II. This is unlikely to have come from Philostorgius given the content of more detailed derivations, and it remains an open question where Photius and Zosimus sourced their version blaming Constans. A more substantial echo of Philostorgius can be found in the *Passion of Artemius*, perhaps from the eighth century, whose author depended heavily on Philostorgius for political context.⁸⁴ Quite contrary to Photius, the *Passion of Artemius* says that Constantine II “took up arms against a brother who had done no wrong”, and that Constantine II had claimed that “Constans had appropriated the greatest share of the empire that belonged to him” (ὅτι πλεῖστον μέρος τῆς αὐτῶ προσηκούσης ἀρχῆς ἐσφετερίσατο).⁸⁵

⁸¹ Bleckmann 2003: 245–246.

⁸² Both names are associated with the many editions of this text. One may be a copyist, or they both may be the same person, who could perhaps also be associated with the hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes. For a summary, see Neville 2018: 118–123. The edition used is Wahlgren 2006.

⁸³ Sym. 89.1. Derivative versions of this text are preserved in other Byzantine chronicles.

⁸⁴ Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 218.

⁸⁵ *Passion of Artemius* 9, trans. Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 228.

This latter detail is particularly interesting in light of *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27 and the question of authority in a divided empire. In the *Passion of Artemius*, Constantine II is not just complaining about the territorial division of the empire but rather its legislative and judicial division; he is complaining that Constans “appropriated” part of a larger whole “that belonged to him”. This recalls one of our earlier sources, the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, which claims the brothers were disputing “the legal right (*ius*) to Italy and Africa”, rather than the territorial division described as “*partes regendas*” in an earlier section.⁸⁶ It is certainly the case that Constantine II’s territory, if taken as a discrete realm, could have been a source of resentment for the eldest brother and senior Augustus. However, if he had assumed in 337 that it was to serve as a sphere of military responsibility and an administrative base from which to rule the whole empire, then it makes sense that Constantine II would have agreed to directly govern a familiar region with potential for military glory. The peripatetic ruling style of Constantine I after the defeat of Licinius may be key to understanding Constantine II’s expectations. As Diocletian had done, Constantine I left subordinate members of the imperial college to administer different areas of the empire while he moved from place to place addressing the most urgent needs, a role that Constantine II could reasonably expect to inherit as senior Augustus. If Constantine II felt his authority over his brothers’ territories was beginning to ossify, then perhaps the division agreed in 337 began to appear unfair.

This situation seems to be met in our most detailed source based on Philostorgius,⁸⁷ and our most complete narrative account of the war, the history of Zonaras written in the twelfth century:

Constantine, faulting the division of the territories and either demanding that he concede parts of the empire to him or seeking that both redistribute their realms, kept pestering Constans. Because he adhered to the existing distribution of the empire, was clinging to what had been allotted to him, and was not the least bit accommodating to his brother, Constantine took up arms against him and invaded Constans’ share. He was abroad in Dacia and, when he learned of Constantine’s action, he dispatched against him an army and generals, having himself promised to attack almost immediately

⁸⁶ *Partes regendas* at 41.20 and *ius* at 41.21.

⁸⁷ DiMaio 1988: 241–242.

with a larger army. Then indeed, when those who had been dispatched had come near Constantine, they set ambushes and, after they had joined in battle with him, pretended to flee. When Constantine's men pursued them, the men placed in ambush, who were now in their rear, set upon them from behind and, after those in flight had been turned about, trapped them in between. Much of Constantine's army and he, too, were destroyed. For when his horse had been wounded and, as a result of the wound, had thrashed about and bucked, Constantine fell from his seat and was killed after he had received many wounds, having failed to attain his desire and forfeited his life itself besides, and because he had been the instigator of injustices, also having lost his portion of the empire.⁸⁸

Zonaras' account carries an important implication. It makes no sense for Constantine II to have agreed to terms in 337 that he would find unacceptable in 340 unless something had changed in the meantime. Our sources are suggestive: we know that Constantine II interfered with the administration of Constans' African territories, although we do not know with what result, and we know that he interfered with the church in Alexandria, with the result that his ally Athanasius was eventually chased out of Egypt by Constantius in 339. In both instances we can detect Constantine II's desire to exercise his authority over the territory of his brothers; in the latter case we can see this authority being rejected. In Zonaras, Constantine II seeks a fairer distribution of the empire—perhaps to redress a rejection of his authority beyond his borders—but Constans “was not the least bit accommodating”. Zonaras says it was as a result of this that Constantine II entered Constans' territory under arms. Zosimus and Photius, drawing from some other source of information, identify Constans as the instigator. How can the two narratives be reconciled? The only answer that satisfies both is if Constantine II entered Italy not to seize Constans' territory but to display his authority over it. This is far from implausible; indeed it is far more plausible than the alternative of an unprovoked invasion. As Constantine II was shaping his rule as senior Augustus in the mould of Constantine I, personally supervising the territories of his co-rulers was not just a right but a duty. And, as shall be demonstrated in the next section, the chronology of the war supports this interpretation.

⁸⁸ Zonar. 13.5.6–17, trans. Banchich and Lane 2009: 159.

DATES AND DISTANCES

Cod. Theod. 11.12.1 tells us that Constantine II must have already been killed by 29 April 340. The earlier law from 9 April, split into *Cod. Theod.* 2.6.5 and 10.15.3, shows that there was an emperor in the vicinity of Aquileia on this date, issuing legislation to Petronius in Africa about the fisc. What we do not know is *which* emperor was in Aquileia, Constantine II before his death or Constans after it.⁸⁹ This gives us two possible scenarios. In the first, Constantine II reached Aquileia at some point before 9 April, issued the law to Petronius, and was killed before 29 April. In the second, Constans arrived in Aquileia at some point before 9 April and issued the law to Petronius, in which case Constantine II had already been killed by Constans' vanguard some time before. In short, Constantine II was either killed between 9 April and 29 April, or some time before 9 April.

A consideration of the distances involved can help clarify matters.⁹⁰ Constantine II travelled around 750 miles (all distances and speeds are measured in modern miles unless stated otherwise) from Trier, probably taking the route through Strasbourg and crossing the Alps from Bregenz to Lake Como, before heading east to end up at Aquileia. This pass was certainly in military use in the mid-fourth century. Constantius II's forces used it in 355, and he evidently planned to use it again in 361, as he ordered three million bushels of wheat to be stockpiled at Bregenz and the same again near the Cottian Alps.⁹¹ There are other routes Constantine II could have taken in 340, but all are less plausible within the chronological constraints. The Bregenz-Lake Como route involves a relatively short ascent and descent which briefly rises to a high point of more than two thousand metres above sea level around the modern Swiss-Italian border; the Strasbourg-Virunum route involves a gentler climb to the same height, but with much longer spent at high altitudes, so the snow at that time of year would have proved a greater impediment. For these reasons the chronological constraints I have derived from the Bregenz-Lake Como

⁸⁹ *Cod. Theod.* 10.15.3 is attributed to Constantius (who was certainly in the East), and 2.6.5 names both Constantius and Constans. As we know from many other examples, neither attribution is dependable. The addressee does not help much either; he was a *vicarius* in Constans' territory, but Constantine II also had a history of sending legislation to Africa.

⁹⁰ Routes and distances were calculated using orbis.stanford.edu and omnesviac.org (note that only the former calculates accurate distances as the latter displays figures from the Peutinger Map).

⁹¹ 355: *Amm. Marc.* 15.4.1–13. 361: Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 286b, and Elton 2013: 664.

route must apply even more so to other possible routes, and as shall be shown below, these alternative routes are unlikely to have been possible within the timeframe.

To set a benchmark for speed in the late empire, Julian's army, leaving Antioch on 5 March 363 and arriving at Carrhae several days (*"aliquot dies"*) before 19 March, did not average much more than seventeen miles per day in favourable marching conditions with fresh troops, which the old soldier Ammianus regarded as extremely quick.⁹² Given that Constantine II's troops marched a great deal further, this pace is unlikely to have been sustainable, and is adopted here only as a maximum possible speed in accordance with other modern estimates.⁹³ The legions could certainly march faster, but not for days on end; Vegetius reported that troops should (ideally) practise marching up to twenty-two miles a day, but marching was practised only three days a month and apparently not for consecutive days.⁹⁴ If Constantine II equalled this speed for the approach from Lake Como to Aquileia, he could have covered this 260-mile stretch in a little more than fifteen days.

The Alpine crossing to reach Lake Como from Bregenz would have been highly weather dependent. Ammianus describes the dangers of the Alps before the snow had melted, and a climate study indicates that the winter of 340 was in a cold period.⁹⁵ Constantine II would not have attempted this crossing before spring. This helps reconstruct his itinerary, as it is highly unlikely that he would have begun the crossing before early March, after the celebrations for the anniversary of his accession on 1 March. Even in balmy Antioch, Julian waited till 5 March 363 for good enough weather to mobilise.⁹⁶

Moreover, the seventeen miles a day Julian's army managed would have been out of the question for the steep climb over the Alps. The crossing from Bregenz to Lake Como was 142 miles, and if (to pick a convenient figure) Constantine II's army managed nine miles a day for the crossing, the whole journey from Bregenz to Aquileia would have taken a full month in total. However, the figure of nine miles a day is an arbitrary and

⁹² *Amm. Marc.* 23.2.6–7 and 23.3.2–3, assuming around 12 days of marching and a journey of roughly 212 miles (calculated from [google.com/maps](https://www.google.com/maps) to follow more accurately Ammianus' route).

⁹³ E.g. Benario 1986: 360; Grant 1974: xxix; Murison 1979: 188.

⁹⁴ *Veg., Mil.* 1.9 and 1.27 (24 *mp* = 22 miles).

⁹⁵ *Amm. Marc.* 15.10.4–5; McCormick et al. 2012: 185.

⁹⁶ *Amm. Marc.* 23.2.6.

generous one. According to Ammianus, even in spring an Alpine descent had to be conducted at a crawl.⁹⁷ Add to this logistical issues such as procuring supplies, unforeseen hindrances, and other delays such as the celebration of Easter (30 March 340), on top of the fact that seventeen miles per day from Lake Como to Aquileia was a generous estimate to begin with, and the figure of a month's march in total starts to look implausibly fast. Moreover, the issue cannot be resolved by positing an earlier departure date. If Constantine II began his crossing earlier, any advantage would be negated by the weather, as he would be slowed even more by ice and snow. Considering the risk to his men present even in early spring, the later the departure date, the likelier it is.

This reconstruction is a demonstration of how fast Constantine II's journey could possibly have been when environmental conditions are considered. We can propose other routes and circumstances, but none that point to a faster journey from Constantine II's side of the Alps to Aquileia. A journey time of well over a month and the earliest plausible starting date of early March mean that Constantine II could not possibly have reached Aquileia before early April. Given the extremely tight schedule, the later Constantine II arrives in Aquileia, the more plausible our reconstruction is. For this reason, it is impossible that Constantine II was killed so early in the year that Constans could catch up with his vanguard in time to issue the law to Petronius on 9 April. Constantine II would have had to have left dangerously early, sometime in February before his accession celebrations; in an average winter it would still have been snowing which would have slowed him down anyway, while endangering his army. The only realistic chronology is Constantine II leaving Bregenz in early March, arriving in Aquileia around 9 April and issuing the law to Petronius, then being killed by Constans' vanguard in the twenty days before Constans' *publicus ac noster inimicus* law of 29 April. Given the rather undramatic tone of the constitution, and the processes that must have already occurred to establish Marcellinus as the consolidator of Constans' new territory, as well as the fact that Constantine II had no reason to linger near Aquileia, it is logically likely that his death occurred within a few days or a week of the law of 9 April.

The attribution of this law to Constantine II comes with another implication, which bolsters my interpretation of *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27. While entering Constans' Italian territory, Constantine II was also issuing

⁹⁷ Amm. Marc. 15.10.4.

legislation to Constans' *vicarius* of Africa. Thus, Constantine II was not just travelling through Constans' territory but was taking a proactive interest in its governance. This legislation would be eccentric for an invading general, but not strange at all for a peripatetic administrator. If Constantine II's entry into Italy was intended not as the opening act of an all-out civil war but as an assertion that his *auctoritas* was not territorially limited, then demonstrating his *ius dare* over Africa makes perfect sense. Constantine II was not looking for a fight. He may have been very surprised that he got one.

Zonaras' narrative of Constantine II's death is also revealing. He tells us that Constans' army, with their emperor following behind them with a larger force, set ambushes and engaged Constantine II's men, provoking their pursuit into the ambush. For this to be possible, Constans' generals must have chosen the battleground and initiated the fighting to ensure it happened in the right place. Certainly Constantine II cannot have prepared for this engagement, as Aquileia is surrounded by flat farmland for miles around, and if he had scouted properly he would never have allowed his men to charge straight into an ambush.⁹⁸ The implication of this is that Constans' troops were responsible for starting the fighting. Given that Constantine II was an experienced commander, his conduct at Aquileia suggests he was not prepared for conflict.

The *Epitome de Caesaribus* tells us that Constantine II was "slain and thrown into a river, the name for which is Alsa, not far from Aquileia". As repositories for unpopular emperors, rivers were a perennial favourite of the Romans, from the cries of "to the Tiber with Tiberius" to the violent ends of Vitellius, Elagabalus, and of course Constantine I's enemy Maxentius who drowned in the Tiber at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.⁹⁹ However, no other source claims that Constantine II was actually thrown into the Alsa, and Rufinus' silence is perhaps decisive, given his local knowledge as an Aquileian himself. But this rumour of Constantine II's posthumous fate is an interesting reflection of many of the sources' views of his character. To the author of the *Epitome de Caesaribus* he was reckless and drunk, Eutropius says he "rashly advanced into battle", and Orosius calls him foolhardy.¹⁰⁰ Constantine II, according to these sources, ended

⁹⁸ Veg., *Mil.* 3.6, for reconnaissance in fourth-century military doctrine.

⁹⁹ Suet., *Tib.* 75.1, and *Vit.* 17.2; Cass. Dio 80.20; Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 44.9. Cf. Johnson 2009: 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Epit. de Caes.* 41.21; Eutr. 10.9; Oros. 7.29.

up face down in a metaphorical river of his own making. So, it follows, Constantine II made a number of terrible misjudgements. It may be that those misjudgements all occurred on the day he went into battle, and that his death was the result of a few bad decisions from a commander who should have known better. But it seems more likely this misjudgement was on a grander scale: Constantine II was not prepared to fight a battle because he had not planned on starting a war.

This is a difficult point to argue given that it depends on several small implications in a wide range of sources, which have otherwise been distorted by the following ten years of rule in which Constans justified his actions as self-defence. It should not be a surprise that our sources reflect Constans' legitimising narrative of 340, and relay it in the terms of every other Roman civil war they had seen or heard about. For this reason, the value placed on inference, context, and logistical possibility must be high.

But there are also certain sources yet to be fully discussed. The first is the already-met Symeon Magister, a rather late source but one with interesting claims. He states that Constantine II first communicated with Constans before moving troops, and these troop movements "induced Constans [Constantius in MS] to consternation lest he was advancing towards him for the purpose of attempting a rebellion".¹⁰¹ Bleckmann links Constantine's communication with Constans to his interpretation of Zosimus, Constantine II arranging to move troops through Constans' territories to aid Constantius against Persia.¹⁰² According to Symeon, Constans then received bellicose counsel from his advisors, and started the war. Symeon, his derivatives, and the *Codex Palatinus Graecus* 117 all strike the same note: it was suspicion and "evil advisors exhorting them to a fight".¹⁰³

These late sources are backed up by none other than Ammianus Marcellinus. Although Ammianus' account of Constantine II's death is lost, he later refers to "Amphilochius, a former tribune from Paphlagonia, who had served long before under Constans and was under well-founded suspicion of having sown the seeds of discord between the deceased brothers".¹⁰⁴ Amphilochius himself is introduced as a new character without cross-referencing, so probably did not feature in Ammianus' account

¹⁰¹ Sym. 89.1, trans. Banchich and Lane 2009: 211.

¹⁰² Bleckmann 2003: 245–246.

¹⁰³ Sym. 89.1; Cedrenus I.521.18 ff; Leo Gramm. 90, 5–15; *Codex Palatinus Graecus* 117.15. The quote is from Cedrenus.

¹⁰⁴ Amm. Marc. 21.6.2; *PLRE* 1: 57 (Amphilochius 1).

of 340, but from Ammianus' opinion that the suspicion was well-founded we can infer that in his account (as in Symeon's) advisors played a substantial part in provoking the conflict of 340—and they were advisors of Constans, not Constantine II. When we include Constans in the reconstructed chronology, it becomes certain that Symeon was right: Constans was forewarned. According to Zonaras, Constans was in Dacia when he heard about the invasion, and two laws in the *Theodosian Code* confirm he was based in the vicinity (at Naissus) in early 340.¹⁰⁵ If a hypothetical spy of Constans rode from Bregenz at the same time Constantine II began his crossing of the Alps, and used the imperial post to cover a distance of around 950 miles at the breakneck and unsustainable speed of Palladius, around 150 miles per day,¹⁰⁶ then Constans—if he was at Naissus—could have been informed within seven days. There was a distance *c.* 560 miles between Constans and Aquileia to be covered. If Constans and his court were able to reach a decision and dispatch troops immediately, an advance force could have travelled the 560 miles to Aquileia in thirty-three days (at a forced march of seventeen miles a day). In this scenario, the advanced guard could have reached the vicinity of Aquileia forty days from Constantine II's departure.

As discussed, thirty-one days is the fastest Constantine II could have possibly made it from Bregenz to Aquileia. The slowest and more plausible journey, given that the latest he could have arrived at Aquileia was 9 April, is if he left the day after his accession celebrations on 1 March and arrived around thirty-eight days later. This makes a response from Constans without forewarning impossible. It is made even more impossible when we consider there is no reason to suppose that Constans would have had spies in Bregenz, of all places, or that such a spy would be able to use the imperial post in Constantine II's territory. There is no reason to suppose that this hypothetical spy could cover distances as quickly as Palladius, one of the few people from antiquity recorded for their exceptional speed, let alone sustain such incredible speeds over a week's travel and an Alpine crossing. Nor is it likely that Constans and his court took no time to deliberate and debate before making a decision, and it is even less likely that they would be able to mobilise troops instantaneously and dispatch them in an unexpected direction without logistical arrangements. Furthermore, if we trust Zonaras, Constans was not even in Naissus but somewhere in

¹⁰⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.29 (19 January) and 10.10.5 (2 February).

¹⁰⁶ Ramsay 1925, *passim*; Burgess 2008: 49–50.

Dacia, perhaps even across the Danube. Nor is it possible that Constans' troops could have maintained seventeen miles per day when they had their own Alpine crossing to contend with, over the Julian passes on the approach to Aquileia. They would also have had to arrive in Aquileia at least a day before Constantine II to have time to choose a battlefield, prepare ambushes, and rest themselves for the fighting. When these practical considerations are considered, any version of events that excludes forewarning becomes not just untenable but outlandish.

What, then, was the nature of this forewarning? It cannot have been a declaration of war from Constantine II, and nor can it have been an announcement of an intention to annex territory (which would have been much the same thing). Neither of these make sense of Amphilochius "having sown the seeds of discord" at Constans' court in Ammianus, nor of the references to uncertainty and "base counsels" in Symeon. Neither does Bleckmann's interpretation of Zosimus' remark that Constans sent soldiers "as if to assist him in the war against the Persians". Bleckmann suggests Zosimus meant to say that Constantine II (not Constans) sent soldiers on the pretext of marching through Constans' territory to aid Constantius, with the intention of overthrowing Constans.¹⁰⁷ But such a scheme makes little military sense; by this deception Constantine II would have kept some element of surprise, but he must have known how implausible the claim would sound given the brothers' previous resistance to sharing troops,¹⁰⁸ and instead of fighting Constans closer to his own territory and supply lines, he would have had to have planned on fighting in Dacia, where Constans' forces and fortifications were at their most concentrated.

A far more plausible explanation is implied by Symeon: "having communicated with his brother Constantius [i.e. Constans], he began approaching certain locations with much strength and power". That is, Constantine II notified Constans of his intention to march troops into Italy. The only plausible reason for him doing this is to ensure his actions were *not* interpreted as an invasion, but as the legitimate actions of a senior Augustus. This, as Symeon puts it, "induced [Constans] to consternation lest [Constantine II] was advancing towards him for the purpose of attempting a rebellion. And when he had attained base counsels which induced him more toward action and fear and, through these, toward war,

¹⁰⁷ Bleckmann 2003: 245–246.

¹⁰⁸ Julian., *Or.* 1.18c.

than disabused him of such calculations, he moved against him". This is where the suggestions of plotting and assassination by Zosimus and Photius begin to make sense. Constans and his generals, whether out of paranoid fear or ambitious opportunism, conspired to intercept Constantine II on his planned route and ambush him.

RECONSTRUCTION AND CONCLUSION

The use of date and distance analysis, alongside an examination of the sources from a fresh perspective, reveals deep and insoluble problems with the traditional narrative of 340. The story that Constantine II, coveting his brother's territory, launched a rash invasion and was killed in self-defence, is demonstrably a product of Constans' court, designed to legitimise the actions of the younger Augustus. In fact, this story is not only suspect in origin but also impossible.

Surviving material from before the civil war shows a world in which the territories were not discrete and sovereign "kingdoms" of the three Augusti but part of an empire under a unified imperial college with Constantine II at its head. If Constans and Constantius had begun to question Constantine II's suzerainty over territories that were in practical terms largely autonomous, then Constantine II might have felt the need to assert this overarching authority more proactively than in previous years. Senior Augusti were historically peripatetic, with symbolic importance attached to the presence of the imperial personage. In this context, there was no justification to treat the movement of Constantine II into Italy as an invasion. Indeed, it was Constantine II's propriety in notifying his brother in advance that created the opportunity to ambush and destroy him. Constantine II must have positioned himself near the Alps, and at the end of winter, probably in early March 340, he began his crossing to northern Italy with a military force. Given that they were destroyed by a mere vanguard of Constans' troops, this force was probably small, perhaps made up of just the *scholae palatinae* rather than the *comitatenses* of a conventional field army. Constantine II headed through Italy to Aquileia, and perhaps—as Bleckmann adduces from the *Passion of Artemius*—made overtures to Constans' officers en route.¹⁰⁹ Constantine II was in or near Aquileia by 9 April, and, continuing his public assertion of authority, he issued legislation to Constans' *vicarius* in Africa.

¹⁰⁹ Bleckmann 2003: 247–248.

Meanwhile, Constans' forces were preparing to intercept him. Despite Constans' highly successful attempt to rewrite the history of 340, clues have survived showing that the impetus to war came from the machinations of Constans' court, and the encouragement of men like Amphilocheus, who no doubt thrived under the teenaged emperor. Constans sent an advance guard to northern Italy while he himself followed with a larger contingent, perhaps expecting to meet a more substantial force than was the case. The advance guard set ambushes, and when Constantine II approached sometime shortly after 9 April, they attacked in order to provoke his troops before falling back. Constantine II followed Constans' retreating vanguard, either leading the charge or else trying to turn his men from danger, and he and many of his men were killed.

It is impossible to tell whether Constans embarked on his course of action from fear of what Constantine II might attempt in his territory, in defiance of Constantine II's hegemony, or to exploit his brother's weakness for his own gain. It is impossible to tell whether he acted on his own bellicose initiative, or whether it truly was the cliché of "evil advisors" as suggested by some of the sources. Constans' young age at the time lends plausibility to the latter, and of course, from Constans' perspective, any advice he had chosen to follow was not evil but extremely profitable to his rule. At a stroke, the collegial hierarchy that had put Constans at a disadvantage was overturned, and with the immense gains in territory and military resources, Constans was set to dominate the empire for as long as he could hold power.

It turned out to be almost exactly a decade until Constans was overthrown in January 350. The practicality of territorial autonomy that had begun to emerge in 337–340 became a defining feature of the 340s. With no functional imperial hierarchy and the aftermath of the civil war colouring the surviving brothers' relationship, the East and West began to separate in this period of joint rule. But care must be taken not to use anachronistically the dynamics of the 340s to interpret the preceding period. Despite the abandonment of Constantine I's succession plans, the empire of 337–340 grew out of Constantine I's government with little constitutional upheaval, and has clear commonalities. If a dividing line is to be placed between the collegial government envisioned by Constantine I and the discordant reality of the 340s, it should be placed with the seismic shock of the civil war of 340, not the brief and unsurprising internal struggle that accompanied the succession in 337. This little-known and neglected civil war proved to be a devastating turning point in the history

of the Constantinian dynasty. The senior Augustus was dead, and imperial collegiality along with him. Constans had overextended his flank. The power imbalance of the 340s with the unification of the West made fertile ground for usurpation. Before, a usurper taking over a third of the empire would be left in a perilously weak position, facing the two surviving emperors. But with an imperial college of just two, if Constans were to be deposed, a usurper would face only a single imperial rival while holding the stronger part of the empire. Given the poor relationship between the brothers, even retaliation from Constantius was not guaranteed, and with that, the assassination of the younger emperor became an extremely viable proposition.

Perhaps it was also an attractive proposition for those who had survived the purges of 340 and carried the memory of the previous western administration. Aurelius Celsinus, for example, the “dearest Celsinus” of *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27, was one of the defectors. So was Fabius Titianus, a favourite of Constantine I to judge from his consulship in 337, who had then spent the best part of the 340s in Constantine II’s former territory. Perhaps Magnentius himself, Constans’ killer, had a vestigial loyalty to Constantine II. As a Gallic military man born around 303, he likely spent his best years in the service of Constantine II, and would not have forgotten the betrayal of 340 easily. But Constans had. Or at least Constans had not learned from 340 and did not remember from his own actions how easily an emperor could be unseated, and how suddenly power could be wrenched from what seemed like an inflexible grasp.

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PART II

Representations of Authority



CHAPTER 4

Innovation and Orthodoxy in the Portraiture of Constantine and His Sons

Eric R. Varner

Because he presided over a pivotal period of profound transformation for the Roman empire that witnessed a shift from polytheism to Christianity and the establishment of a new capital at Constantinople, Constantine I (Flavius Iulius Constantinus) is often positioned as an innovator and initiator of change. To be sure, the body of Constantine's sculpted and numismatic portraits bears witness to new directions in imperial representation which established a dynastic homogeneity in the visual arts for his sons and successors. Indeed, the Constantinian experiment in self-representation would prove remarkably long lived and shape the image of subsequent Roman rulers throughout the fourth century. It also signals a profound shift in imperial portraiture as Constantine carefully crafted an image that consciously revived representational modes from the earlier empire. In fact, the majority of Constantine's sculpted portraits were physically recycled from images of earlier emperors like Augustus or Trajan. In these portraits, the authority of the imperial past takes precedence over individualized physiognomic identity and establishes a vision

E. R. Varner (✉)

Art History Department, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA

e-mail: evarner@emory.edu

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of the emperor that is at once more generic and at the same time less normative. Similarly, Constantine's sons—Crispus, Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans—are initially presented as adolescent Julio-Claudian princes, despite the wide differences in their ages, and later as near replicas of their father.

Constantine's earliest images originally presented him as part of the extended and fictive family of the Tetrarchs and they employed the same radical new style and iconography that had been introduced by Diocletian and Maximian in conjunction with their new governmental system.¹ Constantine's first portrait type, as seen on coins, represents him with the closely cropped military coiffure and beard, and in the same geometricized and abstracted style as the members of the first Tetrarchy, as seen for instance in an early *foliis* minted at Carthage between 299–303,² or a somewhat later *foliis* from Thessalonica minted *c.* 311.³ Another early *foliis* from London employs a similar style and confirms that this Tetrarchic imagery was diffused throughout the empire.⁴ Comparison with coins issued for the first Tetrarchs—Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius Chlorus—underscore the shared notions of *similitudo* and *condordia Augustorum* which pervade Tetrarchic images in this period.

Constantine's second portrait type, introduced to mark his *quingennialia* in 311 rejects the Tetrarchic experiment and thoroughly rethinks the imperial image.⁵ The new portrait type eschews the beard that had been an essential feature of imperial representations since the time of Hadrian and also introduces a fuller coiffure made up of long comma-shaped locks to evoke the hairstyles of Trajan and Augustus in particular. The youthful, idealized facial features of this new Constantinian type, as well as its generally classicizing style mark a self-conscious invocation of the glorious imperial past. Significantly, almost all of the surviving replicas of the type are redacted images that have been recarved from pre-existing imperial portraits including representations of Augustus, Trajan, and

¹ On family fictions in Tetrarchic art, see Kampen 2009: 104–122.

² *RIC* 6 Carthage 32a, depicting Constantius.

³ *RIC* 6 Thessalonica 47b.

⁴ *RIC* 6 London 61.

⁵ The second portrait type is also employed at precisely the same time for the recut likenesses on the arch of Constantine; L'Orange and Wegner 1984: 77; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 149; Parisi Presicce 2006, 145–154.

Fig. 4.1 Augustus/
Constantine, Viterbo,
Museo, formerly Rome,
Villa Giulia, inv. 104973.
(Source: photo Annewies
Van Den Hoek)



Hadrian.⁶ At least two portraits of Constantine's second type, from Bolsena, now in Viterbo, and formerly in a private collection in London have been extracted from likenesses of Augustus (Fig. 4.1).⁷ Anomalies in both portraits betray their initial identity as Augustus. In the Viterbo head, elements of Augustus' (Prima-Porta type) coiffure are still visible at the top and back of the head, on the nape of the neck and in front of the ears. The general shape of the mouth also conforms to Augustus' portraits. Similarly, representations of Constantine in New York (from the Giustiniani Collection in Rome) and Madrid (from the Odescalchi Collection in

⁶Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 149–151; Evers 1991: 799–800; Romeo 1999; Hannestad 2007; La Rocca and Zanker 2007; Ambrogi 2009–2010: 342, n. 111; Parisi Presicce 2012: 112–113.

⁷Viterbo, Museo (formerly Rome, Villa Giulia, inv. 104973), h. 0.375 m.; Giuliano 1991: 3–6, figs. 1–4; Giuliano 1997: pl. 7.3–4; London, Giuliano 1991: 7–8, figs. 9–11; Giuliano 1997; Romeo 1999: 214, figs. 34–36; Varner 2014: 63–64, pl. 11.

Fig. 4.2 Trajan/
Constantine, New York,
Metropolitan Museum
of Art. (Source:
photo author)



Rome) contain remnants of their original iteration as Trajan (Fig. 4.2).⁸ In addition, an “unfinished” portrait of Trajan in Rome is far more likely to be in the process of being reconceived as Constantine.⁹ A fifth portrait in the Torlonia collection retains much of Hadrian’s type 2 (Chiaramonti 392) coiffure.¹⁰ At the same time that these sculpted portraits of several of Rome’s earlier “good” emperors were being reconceived as Constantine,

⁸New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.229; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 150 no. 8; Schäfer 1999; a head in the Prado has also been refashioned from Trajan, Madrid, Prado, inv. 125 E, h. 0.26 m.; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 149–150, no. 3; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 147; Schröder 1993: 296–298, no. 89.

⁹Palazzo dei Conservatori, Giardino Romano 26, inv. 1292, h. 0.61 m.; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 42–43, no. 43, pl. 48; Prusac 2011: 148, no. 314; Zanker 2016: 99–101, no. 31.

¹⁰Rome, Museo Torlonia 619; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 150–151, no 11; Evers 1991: 799–800, fig. 9; Prusac 2011: 152, no. 396, fig. 107.

Fig. 4.3 Domitian/
Constantine, Rome,
Markets of Trajan, inv.
FT 01337. (Source:
photo author)



the relief portraits of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius were recarved to Constantine on the Arch of Constantine in Rome, dedicated in 315.

Constantine's portraits could also be reconstituted from representations of other emperors. A portrait in Tunis exhibits abundant signs in the arrangement of the hair on the side of the head which confirm its reconfiguration from a type 4 portrait of Nero.¹¹ Two additional type 2 likeness of Constantine in Rome and Boston have been recrafted from representations of Domitian and they retain strong elements of the original Domitianic coiffure (Fig. 4.3).¹² The Rome head was discovered at the Markets of Trajan, where it is likely to have been displayed. If the original

¹¹ Musée du Bardo inv. C 77; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 150, no. 4; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 304, fig. 59a–b.

¹² Rome, Mercati Trajanei, FT 10337; La Rocca and Zanker 2007; Hannestad 2007: 103, figs. 11, 13; Meneghini 2009: fig. 167; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 309, fig. 61a–e; Fittschen and Zanker 2014: 57–59, no. 50a, pl. 70, Beil. 17. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 89.6; Varner 2004: 269, no. 530, figs. 129a–d; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 308.

portrait was still recognized as Domitian in the early fourth century, its reuse may have had additional meaning for Constantine's new Flavian dynasty. Like the portraits recut from Trajan in New York and Madrid, Constantine's appearance in the Forum of Trajan would have reinforced the new emperor's linkages with Trajan; there were additional representations of Constantine also displayed in the Forum heightening his presence at the site.¹³ Subsequently, only Theodosius I and Honorius are honored with portraits at the Forum of Trajan, and they also seem to be emphasizing their connections to Trajan.¹⁴

A portrait in the Palazzo Mattei in Rome appears to have begun as an ideal Polykleitan sculpture like the "Dresden Youth" or the "Narcissus", or alternatively as an Antinous.¹⁵ Other type 2 portraits which exhibit signs of recarving include representations in Rome,¹⁶ Copenhagen,¹⁷ and Grottaferrata.¹⁸ Three of Constantine's portraits in Rome have also been reworked from the images of his defeated rival, Maxentius, including a head in Rome and statues from the baths initiated by Maxentius on the Quirinal,¹⁹ and Constantine's most famous likeness, the colossal image

¹³Two statue bases were also dedicated to Constantine by C. Ceionius Rufus Volusianus (*praefectus urbi* from 313–315) (*CIL* 6.1140) and Q. Attius Granius Caecilianus (*CIL* 6.1143): La Rocca and Zanker 2007: 155; Chenault 2012: 123. Toward the end of Constantine's reign, the Forum became the locus for the display of senatorial portrait statues, including some with re-used statue bases, see Chenault 2012: 121.

¹⁴Chenault 2012: 124.

¹⁵Cortile; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: no. 6; Evers 1991: 799, who suggests the possibility that it is recarved from an ideal Polykleitan composition; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 301, fig. 57, possibly recarved from Antinous.

¹⁶Musei Vaticani, Galleria Chiaramonti, 35.16, inv. 1749; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 150, no. 10.

¹⁷Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 774a, inv. 3147; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 150, no. 7; Johansen 1995: 170, no. 74; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 302, fig. 58a–d.

¹⁸Museum, inv. 1149, Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 149, no. 1; Prusac 2011: 147, no. 303; Rome.

¹⁹Rome, Museo Capitolino, Stanza terrena a destra, 1.25, inv. 1769; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 143–144, no. 119, pl. 148; Varner 2004: 286, no. 9.3, figs. 210a–c; Ambrogio 2009–2010: 344–346, figs. 52–53; and, from the Baths of Maxentius Constantine: Rome, Campidoglio, Balustrade; Ss. Giovanni in Laterano, narthex; see von Heintze 1979; L'Orange and Wegner 1984: 55, 58–59, 126, pl. 43–44; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 144–145, no. 120, pls. 149–150, 147, no. 121, n. 10, 151, no. 122, rep. C13; Romeo 1999: 205; Varner 2004: 286, 288, nos. 9.2, 5; Parisi Presicce 2006: 156; Deppmeyer 2008 II: 430–434, no. 229.

from the Basilica Nova in the Forum Romanum.²⁰ The colossal portrait has a more complicated reconstructive history, as it first represented Hadrian before its reconfiguration as Maxentius and finally Constantine. Remnants of the Maxentian image are visible in the treatment of the mouth and eyes, as seen in an unaltered portrait of Maxentius in Stockholm, while the unusual creased earlobes of the colossus are still visible from its original incarnation as Hadrian, whose images are the only imperial portraits to feature them. As the transformation from Hadrian to Maxentius had only recently transpired, Constantine's connections to Hadrian would have still been operative, as in the Torlonia head directly recarved from Hadrian.

Since the majority of Constantine's type 2 images have been recut, they are not just semantically founded on visual and stylistic citations to previous imperial portraits but are quite literally crafted out of the material remnants of the imperial past in much the same way that Constantine's two new basilicas, the Lateran and St. Peter's, incorporated pre-existing architectural elements.²¹ The fact that so many of Constantine's marble images are reconfigured from earlier representations reflects a conscious choice and also introduces a high degree of variation among the surviving replicas which suggests that recycling the past was more important than establishing a monolithic portrait presence.²²

Indeed, from 311 on, Constantine's sculpted images focus on their linkages to the past and imperial continuum rather than crafting a highly individualized and consistent identity for Constantine. These portraits often exploit their relationship with earlier Julio-Claudian and Trajanic likenesses, at the expense of rendering a consistent physiognomical identity for Constantine. The contemporary iconotextual poems of Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius also express in their figured verses a distinct ambivalence about fixing Constantine's specific identity. Optatian's poems often explore the instability between the "literal and symbolic, or the figurative and the true".²³ Like Constantine's portraits, the poems also spoliage ear-

²⁰Inv. 1622, h. 2.97 m.; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 147–152, no. 122, pls. 151–152; Kolb 1987: 206–208, no. M. 17; Varner 2004: 11, 217–218, 286, 287–288, no. 9.4, figs. 209a–d; Parisi Presicce 2006, 2007; Ruck 2007: 235–247; Prusac 2011 147, no. 307, figs. 60a–h; Bardill 2012: 203–217, figs. 130–132, 134–137, 140–141; Parisi Presicce 2012: 115–117, figs. 2–3.

²¹Bosman 2004, 2013.

²²Parisi Presicce 2012: 112.

²³Squire forthcoming.

lier Latin poetry.²⁴ Optatian's third poem attempts to picture Constantine's imperial countenance, but, tellingly it is formulated as a *vultus Augusti* rather than an individualized *vultus Constantini*.

The youthful and idealized facial features of the type 2 likenesses and their retrospective coiffures proved enormously successful and continued to be a hallmark of Constantine's images throughout the rest of his reign, as evidenced by the bronze colossal head in the Palazzo dei Conservatori that seems to have been created late in his principate or even posthumously (Fig. 4.4).²⁵ This gilded bronze image still exhibits the classicizing qualities of the type 2 portraits, but has a longer, more luxuriously modeled coiffure. The head has also been associated with the *Equus Constantini* located near the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum, whose

Fig. 4.4 Constantine, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. 1072. (Source: photo author)



²⁴ Squire 2014: 99; Squire 2016.

²⁵ Palazzo dei Conservatori, Esedra di Marco Aurelio, inv. 1072, h. 1.7 m.; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 152–155, no. 123, pls. 153–154; Parisi Presicce 2012: 117–118.

extant remains suggest a statue commensurate in scale to the equestrian image of Trajan in his forum, approximately two times the size of the Capitoline equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius.²⁶

Constantine's revised visual conception of the Roman ruler found wide dissemination throughout the empire on the coinage that consistently configured the emperor with the beardless, youthful physiognomy and Augustan-Trajanic coiffure from its inception in 311 until Constantine's death in 337. There could be variations in the format or iconographic details and the most important iconographic innovation was the appearance of the flat or jeweled diadem and upturned head after the defeat of Licinius at the Battle of Chrysopolis in 324, introducing an element of "royal charisma" into Constantine's imagery and communicating the dynastic claims of the new *domus divina*.²⁷ These new coin portraits revived the royal images of Hellenistic kings modeled on Alexander the Great.

Constantine's glyptic images similarly maintain the classicizing focus of the sculpted and numismatic portraits, including amethysts in Berlin and London which represent Constantine with the same jeweled diadem that first appear on coins in 326.²⁸ Like the marble portraits, gem portraits could also be crafted out of pre-existing images. A cameo in Paris, which originally depicted Nero and was then remodeled as Trajan, presents a particularly classicizing version of Constantine's second portrait type.²⁹ The gem presents a very traditional portrait of the emperor wearing the laurel crown (*corona triumphalis*) and paludamentum. Its origins as a Julio-Claudian cameo give it an impeccable imperial provenance. The first recycling as Trajan erased most of its specifically Neronian references leaving only the more generic Julio-Claudian connotations. In its recarved state, the cameo closely resembles the surviving Julio-Claudian gems of similar format and forges a continuum with the past. Other redacted gems

²⁶ *CIL* 6.1141; Giuliani and Verducci 1987: 69–73, fig. 70; Verducci 1995; Parisi Presicce 2012: 117–118.

²⁷ Smith 1997: 177, 187; Elsner 2012: 262.

²⁸ Berlin, Staatliche Museen, inv. 30931; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 445, no. 672; Megow 2011: 231–232, fig. 42; Spier 2013: 18, no. 4; Leipzig, Stadt Bibliothek; Megow 2011: 231–232, fig. 44; Spier 2013: 19, no. 9. London, British Museum, inv. GR 1907.5–14.1; Megow 2011: 231–232, fig. 43; Spier 2013: 18, no. 5.

²⁹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles (Babelon 313); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: no. 262, pl. 136; Megow 2011: 205–206, cat. 1.B 2 (fig. 27).

include St. Chapelle³⁰ and a Constantinian updating of a rock crystal in Florence, which seems to have originally depicted Commodus as Sol.³¹ The Constantinian adaptation of solar imagery and alignment with major monuments like the Colossus of Nero in order to access notions of the golden age and the eternity of empire are well documented.³² Again, all of these “palinglypts” functioned as important touchstones with past imperial glory.³³

Constantinian gem engravers could also work in an idiom which self-consciously recalled the great cameos of the early imperial period.³⁴ The Ada cameo uses the language of imperial apotheosis to present the new Flavian/Julian dynasty.³⁵ The cameo, produced *c.* 317–323 depicts Helena, Fausta, Constantine, and two of his sons, Constantine II, and either Crispus, his son by Minervina, or Constantius II, his second son with Fausta. The double eagles who carry the imperial family aloft are derived from the early imperial apotheosis cameos like those of Claudius, Nero, and Hadrian.³⁶ Visually, the cameo clearly instantiates the new *domus divina* using the well-established language of imperial apotheosis.

A second Constantinian apotheosis cameo in Bucharest features nearly identical double eagles to the Ada cameo, but in this case they carry two facing busts of a bearded man and a veiled woman and the Palladium.³⁷ Although the cameo has been interpreted as depicting the apotheosis of Julian and his wife Helena, its extremely stylized visages of the two figures cannot be precisely identified, but together with the Palladium, they cre-

³⁰ Gagetti 2016, fig. 6.

³¹ Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Tedor dei Granduchi, inv. Gemme 1921, no. 408; Conticelli et al. 2016, 236–238, no. 35 (Gagetti).

³² Marlowe 2006.

³³ For palinglypts see Platz-Horster 1984. A pair of mid second century male and female rock crystal busts apparently recut in the early Constantinian period are also symptomatic of contemporary trends in glyptic recycling, see Conticelli et al. 2016: 192, nos. 16–17 (Gagetti).

³⁴ Megow 2011.

³⁵ Trier, Stadtbibliothek, HS 22, 8.5 × 10.7 cm; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 202–204, fig. 755; Megow 2011: 180–187 cat. 1 A 2.

³⁶ Claudius: Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles 265, h. 10.7 × 11.5 cm; Megow 2011: 199–200, no. A 80, pl. 27.1; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 109–110, no. 120; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 168, fig. 638; Koortbojian 2013: 58–59, fig. III.4. Nero: Nancy, Médiathèque de Nancy, inv. Camée 1; Bergmann 1998: 149, 220 pl. 29.1–2.

³⁷ Bucharest, Romanian Academy, Inv. C.O.; Megow 2011: 196–198, figs. 21–22.

ate divinized ancestors for the family of Constantine, in much the same way as the extraordinary consecration coins that were issued *c.* 318–319 and honored Claudius Gothicus, Constantius Chlorus, and Maximian, as well as the panegyric poetry that cite Divus Claudius Gothicus as Constantine's divine progenitor.³⁸ Optatian configures Claudius Gothicus as the divine ancestor (*proavus*, *avtus*, and *avus*) of the new Julian/Flavian *domus divina* of Constantine, whose glory begins with him.³⁹ While it is possible that the dynastic links to Claudius Gothicus are not entirely fictive, his formulation as *auctor generis* seems to occur first in the panegyric of 310, following the suicide of Constantine's father-in-law, Maximian.⁴⁰ A portrait of Caligula, recarved into a late third-century emperor, possibly Claudius Gothicus, may even be a Constantinian reclamation of the portrait intended to promote the dynasty's descent from Gothicus.⁴¹

A third cameo, the Gemma Constantiniana, now in Leiden also revives Julio-Claudian glyptic modes.⁴² The cameo depicts Constantine in an unusual chariot pulled by two centaurs. The gem creates a portrait identity for Constantine based largely on the portraits of Claudius, or second portrait type of Nero. The emperor holds the thunderbolt of Jupiter and is accompanied by two female figures, the older of which has a hairstyle similar to those of Agrippina the Younger, while the younger woman's coiffure recalls those of the Tiberian period. A small boy in armor and wearing a helmet stands beneath the emperor. A figure of Victory flies over the centaurs extending a *corona triumphalis* toward the emperor. The family

³⁸ Divus Claudius Gothicus: *RIC* 7 Trier 180, nos. 203, 207; Arles 252, nos. 173, 176; Rome 310–312, nos. 106, 109, 112, 115–116, 119, 122, 125, 128; Aquileia 395, nos. 23, 26; Siscia 430, nos. 43, 45; Thessalonica 503, no. 26; Divus Constantius Chlorus: *RIC* 7 Trier 180, nos. 201–202, 206; Arles 252, nos. 175, 178; Rome 310–312, nos. 105, 108, 111, 114, 118, 121, 124, 127; Siscia 395, nos. 22, 25; 430, nos. 42, 46; Thessalonica 503, no. 25; Divus Maximian: Trier 180, nos. 200, 204–205; Arles 252, nos. 174, 177; Rome 310–12, nos. 14, 107, 110, 113, 117, 120, 123, 126; Aquileia 395, nos. 21, 24; Siscia 430 no. 24; Thessalonica 503, no. 24. Barnes 2011: 18, 72–73; Wienand 2012: 238; Hekster 2015: 287–294.

³⁹ *Proavus* (*Carm.* 8.11), *atavus* (*Carm.* 8.14, 10.29), *avus* (*Carm.* 10.vi.); Wienand 2012: 234; see also *Carm.* 8.2–3 (*Claudius invictus bellis indignia magna/virtutem tulerit Gothico de milite parta*) and 8.27–28 (*gothicus ... maximus*); Wienand 2012: 231, 240.

⁴⁰ *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7) 2–3; Wienand 2012: 234, n. 24, 235; Hekster 2015: 225–233. For substantiation of the family connections to Claudius Gothicus, see Chausson 2007: 25–98.

⁴¹ New York, Collection of Shelby White and Leon Levy, h. 0.407 m.; Varner 2004: 34, 236, no. 1.37, figs. 25a–c.

⁴² Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, formerly Utrecht, Geldmuseum; formerly the Hague, 21.1 × 29.7 cm; Megow 2011: 169–180; Halbertsma 2015.

group presented is based on visually recognizable quotations from the imperial past but only generically alluding to Constantine, his sons and daughters, and wife, Fausta, all cloaked in Julio-Claudian allusions. The great size of the cameo also recalls the large-scale cameos that were a hallmark of the Julio-Claudian period and may suggest that there was renewed access to large onyxes in the early third century. Although it has been speculated that the cameo has actually been recut from a Claudian or Neronian cameo, the more schematic and linear style of the engraving, especially evident in the heads of the centaurs and the figure of Victory reveals that the gem is a work of Constantinian manufacture which seeks to emulate earlier Julio-Claudian work, like the Triptolemus cameo in Paris which originally depicted Nero and Agrippina Minor, with Nero's portrait subsequently recarved to Claudius.⁴³ The combination of retrospective portrait elements with more stylized aspects like the Victory recall the juxtaposition of the reused Trajanic, Hadrianic, and Aurelian reliefs with the new, more expressionistic Constantinian reliefs on the Arch of Constantine. Constantine's recarved images in marble and gems, as well as the newly cut cameos that so self-consciously revive Julio-Claudian modes, create a carefully layered identity for the emperor, not unlike the *versus intertexti* of Optatian's contemporary poetry, which itself was profoundly invested in Constantine's dynastic maneuverings and self-representation.⁴⁴ Johannes Wienand has also noted distinctly Augustan echoes in Constantinian coin reverses after the naval victory over Licinius at Chrysopolis on 18 September 324, which feature rostra and recall Augustus' celebrations of his victory at Actium.⁴⁵

Coinciding with the victory over Licinius, mints throughout the empire issued coins for both Helena and Fausta with a narrowly focused iconographic message. Helena's reverses feature *SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE*, while Fausta's depict either *SALUS REIPUBLICAE* or *SPES REIPUBLICAE*.⁴⁶ The dynastic messages of the reverses are abundantly

⁴³ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 276, 8.3 × 7.6 cm; Megow 2011: 207–208, no. A86, pl. 27.3; Wood 1999: 305; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 98–99, no. 105; Alexandridis 2004: 165, no. 120, pl. 58.3; Hallett 2005: 233, pl. 136; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 169.

⁴⁴ Wienand 2012.

⁴⁵ Wienand 2012: 247.

⁴⁶ *SECVRITAS REIPVBLICE* (*sic*); Helena: follis, London, *RIC* 7. 116, no 299; Helena, follis, Lyon, *RIC* 7. 137, no. 234; Helena, follis Trier, *RIC* 7. 205, no. 458, 206, no. 465, 212, no. 508, 213, no. 515; Helena, follis, Arles, *RIC* 7. 266, no. 299, 267, no. 307, 268,

clear. Helena's reverses depict the draped figure of *Securitas*, while *Fausta's* represent *Spes* or *Salus* accompanied by two children. Helena guarantees the security of the empire through her son, now sole emperor, while *Fausta* has produced heirs for Constantine who will ensure the future health and well-being of the empire. The coins of the two Augustae are minted almost exclusively in bronze, thus ensuring their widespread diffusion. Related issues for Constantine's sister, *Constantia*, widow of *Licinius* and identified as *Soror Constantini Aug(usti)* invoke *PIETAS PUBLICA* on the reverses.⁴⁷

The direct appeal to the imperial past through sculptural recycling of earlier monuments would also pervade sculpted female portraits from the Constantinian dynasty, including two seated statues of Constantine's mother Helena recarved from pre-existing representations of the wife of Marcus Aurelius, *Faustina Minor*, in her seventh portrait type which had

no. 317, 269, no. 324; Helena, follis, Rome, *RIC* 7. 325, no. 270, 330, no. 291; Helena, gold solidus, Ticinum, *RIC* 7. 383, no. 183; Helena, follis, Ticinum, *RIC* 7. 385, no. 190, 387, no. 202; Helena, follis Siscia, *RIC* 7. 447, no. 187, 448, no. 196, 453, no. 218; Helena, gold solidus, Sirmium, *RIC* 7. 476, no. 60; Helena, gold solidus, Thessalonike, *RIC* 7. 514, no. 134; Helena, follis, Heraclea, *RIC* 7. 551, no. 79, 552, no. 85, 553, no. 89, 554, no. 95, 557, no. 109; Helena, follis, Constantinople, *RIC* 7. 571, no. 11; Helena, gold solidus, Nicomedia, *RIC* 7. 613, nos. 79–80; Helena, follis, Nicomedia, *RIC* 7. 615, no. 95, 621, no. 129, 624, no. 148; Helena, follis, Cyzicus, *RIC* 7. 647, no. 28, 649, no. 39, 650, no. 49, 651, no. 54; Helena, follis, Antioch, *RIC* 7. 689, no. 67, 690, no. 75, 691, no. 82; Helena, follis, Antioch, *RIC* 7. 709, no. 38, 710, no. 48, 711, no. 57. *SALVS REIPUBLICAE*: *Fausta*, follis, London, *RIC* 7. 116, no. 300; *Fausta*, follis, Lyons, *RIC* 7. 137, no. 235; *Fausta*, follis Trier, *RIC* 7. 205, no. 459, 209, no. 483; *Fausta*, follis, Arles, 263, no. 277, 266, no. 298; *Fausta*, gold solidus, Ticinum, *RIC* 7. 383, no. 182; *Fausta*, follis, Constantinople, *RIC* 7. 571, no. 12; *Fausta*, gold solidus, Nicomedia, *RIC* 7. 613, nos. 77–78; *Fausta*, follis, Nicomedia, *RIC* 7. 615, no. 96, 621, no. 130, 624, no. 149; *Fausta*, follis, Antioch, *RIC* 7. 689, no. 68, 690, no. 76; *Fausta*, follis, Alexandria, *RIC* 7. 709, no. 39. *SPES REIPUBLICAE*: *Fausta*, follis, Trier, *RIC* 7. 205, no. 460, 207, no. 466, 209, no. 484; *Fausta*, follis, Arles, *RIC* 7. 264, nos. 279, 285, 266, no. 300, 267, no. 308; *Fausta*, follis, Rome, *RIC* 7. 326, no. 271, 330, nos. 292–294; *Fausta*, follis, Ticinum, *RIC* 7. 385, no. 191, 387, nos. 203–204; *Fausta*, follis, Siscia, *RIC* 7. 447, no. 188, 448, no. 197; *Fausta*, gold solidus, Sirmium, *RIC* 7. 476, no. 61; *Fausta*, gold solidus, Thessalonike, *RIC* 7. 515, no. 137; *Fausta*, follis, Heraclea, *RIC* 7. 551, no. 80, 552, no. 86; *Fausta*, gold medallion, Nicomedia, *RIC* 7. 612, no. 69A; *Fausta*, follis, Nicomedia, *RIC* 7. 615, no. 97, 621, no. 131, 624, no. 150; *Fausta*, follis, Cyzicus, *RIC* 7. 647, no. 29, 649, no. 40, 650, no. 50; *Fausta*, follis, Antioch, *RIC* 7. 689, no. 69, 690, no. 77; *Fausta*, follis, Alexandria, *RIC* 7. 709, no. 40,

⁴⁷ *Follis*, Constantinople, *RIC* 7. 571, no. 15. For imperial women on the Constantinian coinage see also the chapters by Tougher and Vanderspoel in this volume.



Fig. 4.5 Faustina Minor/Helena, Rome, Capitoline, Stanza degli Imperatori, inv. 496. (Source: photo author)

been introduced in AD 161 at the time of Marcus' accession to the principate (Figs. 4.5 and 4.6).⁴⁸ Both portraits are of nearly identical format and size, employing the “Aphrodite/Olympias/Agrippina” compositional

⁴⁸ Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv 1914.171, h. 1.0 m; Varner 2004: 5, n. 20, 97, 150–151, 154, 272, no. 6.11; fig. 151a–b; Sena Chiesa 2012: 262, no. 183 (Paolucci); Paolucci 2012–2013; Rome Museo Capitolino, Stanza degli Imperatori 59, inv. 496, h. 1.21 m.; Varner 2004: 5, n. 20, 97, 150–151, 154, 273, no. 6.12, fig. 150a–b; La Rocca et al. 2011: 324–325, no. 5.9 (Avagliana); Paolucci 2012–2013.



Fig. 4.6 Faustina/Helena, Uffizi. Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1914.171. (Source: photo author)

type, which seems to have originated in the 430s BC as a depiction of Hygeia on the Acropolis.⁴⁹ By the Roman period, this statuary format had been adapted for a number of additional representations including Hygeia/Salus, Securitas, Concordia, Pax, and Venus.⁵⁰

Fabrizio Paolucci has recently suggested that both portraits should be identified with two seated statues from the vigna of Ascanio Malagrozzi

⁴⁹ Despina 2008: 268–301.

⁵⁰ Arata 1993: 198–199; Paolucci 2012–2013: 431.

on the Caelian.⁵¹ Malagrozzi's vigna was adjacent to the church of S. Stefano Rotondo, according to Ulisse Aldrovandi, which may suggest that the paired images of Helena were displayed in the nearby Castra Peregrina as visual incarnations of dynastic security and imperial well-being.⁵² The original Antonine representations of Faustina may have also been associated with her title of *mater castrorum*. The portraits were likely reconfigured in 324 to celebrate Helena's adoption of the title of Augusta (and the victory over Licinius) or in 326 in honor of Constantine's *vicennalia*.⁵³

The range of the statues' associations made them particularly multivalent and especially appealing in the Constantinian period. Their linkages with Securitas both reinforce and intersect with Helena's coins imagery, and their ties with Venus position Helena as the divine ancestress of both the new Constantinian dynasty and the people of Rome. The assimilation of Roman empresses with Venus had a long history stretching back to Livia and its evocative power was still strong in the early fourth century despite the shift to Christianity and Helena's own Christian faith. The presentation of Helena as Venus had important dynastic implications, and Constantine was essentially the first emperor since Septimius Severus to mount a sustained dynastic strategy in the visual arts. Helena, in particular, is prominently featured as *mater*, *genetrix*, *procreatrix* and *avia* in the epigraphical record.⁵⁴ The multiple meanings of the "Aphrodite-Agrippina-Olympias" type also introduce that possibility of varied interpretations of the empresses' portraits by divergent audiences. Attributes held in the empresses' extended left hand or added metal attributes would have enriched the iconography and suggested preferred readings for the images ranging from Venus to important imperial personifications.⁵⁵ The portraits' reconfigurations were made explicit through visible signs of their recarving and the possible completion of their coiffures in a different material (plaster).⁵⁶ The Capitoline portrait may also have had the hairstyle

⁵¹ Paolucci 2012–2013: 426; See Palma Venetucci 1998, 20, 28, n. 13.

⁵² Aldrovandi 1556: 283.

⁵³ Arata 1993: 200.

⁵⁴ Hekster 2015: 231.

⁵⁵ Paolucci 2012–2013: 439.

⁵⁶ Arata and Paolucci have proposed a metal armature anchored by holes in the neck of the Uffizi statue to support and shape a plaster addition to the coiffure at the back of the head; Arata 1993: 190–193, figs. 1–3; Paolucci 2012–2013: 421–423, figs. 11–12.

adorned with gems and pearls.⁵⁷ Their putative pairing on the Caelian, an area rich in both Antonine and Constantinian associations, constituted a potent evocation of imperial continuum and linked the new Julian/Flavian dynasty to the revered rulers of the second century and underscored Helena's importance as the imperial ancestress.

Helena's gem portraits could also be recrafted out of earlier glyptic likenesses, like the Constantine cameo in Paris, and include an aquamarine in Venice that has probably been recut from an earlier likeness likely of Hadrian's sister-in-law, Matidia Minor, or possibly his wife, Sabina.⁵⁸ The recognizably Hadrianic coiffure with central parting and crimped waves framing the face has been modified and the refashioning of the aquamarine into an image of Helena seems to have been completed in gold, as it is described in 1593 as crowned with gold.⁵⁹ This may have been a gold diadem or possibly golden extensions to the actual coiffure.⁶⁰ The original coiffure resembles those in a series of marble portraits generally assigned to Sabina's half-sister, Matidia Minor.⁶¹ In any case the reconfigured gem creates a new likeness for Helena clearly crafted from a precious image from the imperial past.

Because of her death under mysterious circumstances in 326 and the subsequent suppression of her memory, it is difficult to determine Fausta's presence in the sculptural record. Fausta may have been instrumental in engineering the downfall of her stepson Crispus earlier in 326, and it is unclear if she was executed or committed suicide after her involvement was revealed.⁶² She was undoubtedly honored with numerous portraits as the mother of three of Constantine's sons and heirs, but those images must have been removed from public display, damaged, or deliberately altered after her death. On coins, however, she appears most often with youthful and idealized physiognomy and a waved and centrally parted hairstyle with a bun at the back of the head that strongly resembles the coiffures of Faustina Minor, clearly a conscious choice to visually link the empresses who also shared similar names.

⁵⁷ Arata 1993: 192–194.

⁵⁸ Conticelli et al. 2016: 344 (Gagetti).

⁵⁹ Pellegrini 1593/1900, no. 61.

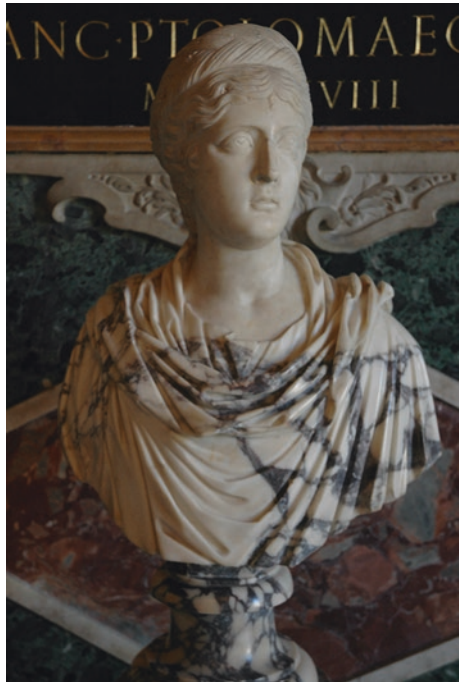
⁶⁰ Conticelli et al. 2016: 344 (Gagetti).

⁶¹ Wood 2015, for objections to the identification of these portraits with Matidia and the suggestion that they should instead be Sabina, see Gagetti 2011: 139–140, and Conticelli et al. 2016: 344 (Gagetti).

⁶² For a review of the evidence and theories surrounding the deaths of Crispus and Fausta, see Barnes 2011: 144–150.

Together, Fausta and Helena created a template for the imperial women of the fourth century and it is difficult to differentiate among the representations of Fausta's daughters, Helena and Constantina, or subsequent empresses like Aelia Flacilla and Galla Placidia. Nevertheless, the portraits of these empresses also continued to reinvent them through retrospective recycling. The "Poppaea Albani" in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, which represents a late fourth-century empress, perhaps Aelia Flacilla, has been recut from an earlier imperial bust, likely Faustina Minor or Julia Mamaea (Fig. 4.7).⁶³ Another head of a fourth-century empress with diadem in Turin seems to be updated from an earlier Hadrianic portrait, likely of

Fig. 4.7 Poppaea Albani, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Sala dei Capitani, inv. 404. (Source: photo author)



⁶³Sala dei Capitani, inv. 404, h. 0.66 m.; Fittschen and Zanker 1984: 118–119, no. 180, pls. 209–210 and colour plate; Ensoli and La Rocca 2000: 259–260 (M. Bergmann), no. 260.

Fig. 4.8 Matidia or Sabina/fourth century empress, Turin, Museo d'Antichità, inv. 161. (Source: photo author)



Matidia, or her daughter Sabina (Fig. 4.8).⁶⁴ The redacted image may depict Constantine's older daughter, Constantina, eventually the wife of Gallus Caesar, or perhaps an empress from later in the fourth century, like Justina. Confusion in identification of the imperial women can also occur on the coinage. Coins often identified as Helena, the mother of Constantine, may in fact more plausibly be associated with Helena the wife of Crispus. She gave birth to a son in 322, as celebrated by Optatian.⁶⁵

As Constantine continued to consolidate the dynasty, the portraits of his sons were carefully modeled on the classicizing images of the father.

⁶⁴Museo di Antichità, inv. 161, h. 0.37; Ensoli and La Rocca 2000: 267, no. 267 (M. Bergmann); Sena Chiesa 2012: 266, no. 192 (G. Pantò).

⁶⁵Optatian, *Carm* 16.37–38, 19.37–38 (Wienand 2012: 242–243, *RIC* 7: 504–505, nos. 48–50 (Thessalonica). These coins present the empress with centrally parted coiffure with bun rather than Haarkranz more typical of Helena, the mother of Constantine. Wienand also notes that they use the title *Nobilissima Femina* where Helena the mother usually uses Augusta. Note also, however, that *RIC* has no. 49 as Fausta.

The alignments in portraiture can be read as the visual analog of Constantine's insistence on *consanguinitas* as the foundational principle for his dynastic program.⁶⁶ In addition, up until 324, the Constantinian portraits are diametrically opposed to the visual strategy of Constantine's rival, Licinius, whose own images were more corpulent, realistically aged, and still employing some of the Tetrarchic strategies, as evidenced in his coins and surviving sculpted representations that can plausibly be associated with them.⁶⁷

Crispus and Constantine II (Flavius Julius Constantinus) were jointly made Caesars in 317, although Constantine II was only one year old. Constantius II (Flavius Julius Constantius) was elevated to the rank of Caesar on 8 November 324, at the age of seven, at the same time that his mother Fausta was raised to the rank of Augusta, and Constans (Flavius Julius Constans) was elevated to the rank of Caesar in 333, at the age of ten. Coins created for the three brothers promoted them as Caesars and heirs with the title *Nobilissimus Caesar* and youthful, classicizing portraits that have a retrospective Julio-Claudian inflection. The date of the *dies imperii* of the two oldest sons, Crispus and Constantine II (1 March) in 317 was carefully chosen to coincide with that of their grandfather, Constantius Chlorus, who had been elevated to the rank of Caesar on the same day, twenty-five years previously.⁶⁸ Constantine seems to have consciously promoted an equalization in status between his two sons. Despite the significant differences in their ages (Crispus was at least nineteen in 321, Constantine II, only five), the two are presented in nearly identical format on the coinage. Both appear as young men, equal in age. Facing portraits from a multiple minted at Siscia depict them with laurel crowns.⁶⁹ Crispus' bust is given the somewhat more privileged left-hand position and is slightly larger, likely to acknowledge his greater age. Facing laureate portraits occur on a medallion reverse from Sirmium, as "consular busts", holding a globe with scepter and eagle.⁷⁰

The two sons can also appear flanking their father on reverses with the legend FELICITAS ROMANORUM and each holding a standard and globe. A solidus from Constantinople with Constans as *Nobilissimus*

⁶⁶For the importance of *consanguinitas*, see Börm 2015: esp. 251, 263–264.

⁶⁷Smith 1997: 191.

⁶⁸Wienand 2012: 237.

⁶⁹RIC 7 Siscia 427, no. 26; Wienand 2012: 245.

⁷⁰RIC 7 Siscia 470, no. 18; Wienand 2012: 246, n. 57 (RIC 7 Sirmium 20 [*sic*]).

Caesar, presents the assembled dynasty on the reverse as guarantors of perpetual security (*SECURITAS PERPETUA*), with Constantine standing, flanked by all three sons in descending scale with Constans as the smallest.⁷¹ Another solidus presents a similar portrait of Constans as *Nobilissimus* Caesar with cuirassed bust and laurel crown.⁷²

An *aureus* minted at Antioch in 326, the year of the *vicennalia* promotes the newly configured *domus divina* after the death of Crispus.⁷³ On this coin, Constantine appears on the obverse with a radiate diadem, while Constantine II and Constantius II are featured as facing diademed busts on the reverse. The configuration of the facial features of the father and sons is nearly identical and stresses their dynastic unity in much the same way as the unified, virtually undifferentiated portraits of the Tetrarchy, but in this case using a youthful, idealized vocabulary that is classically inflected rather than the abstracted Tetrarchic images. The nearly identical depictions of the two brothers, which stress their shared formal characteristics, has interesting historical parallels in the presentation of Caracalla and Geta. In their second portrait types, the two brothers are essentially indistinguishable from one another; as with the Constantinian heirs, the two boys are positioned as doubles of one another.⁷⁴

A porphyry portrait in the Sala dei Busti of the Vatican further illustrates the homogeneous nature of the images of the four brothers in their roles as heirs and Caesars.⁷⁵ The bust projects a youthful and idealized aspect, with a coiffure of tousled comma-shaped locks that recall Julio-Claudian representations. Because of its profoundly classicizing aspect, the portrait has been suspected of being a work of the eighteenth century, when it was acquired from the Principessa Cornelia Costanza Barberini, but it seems rather to have been adapted from a relief bust that adorned one of the second set of porphyry columns added to the fountain aedicula in the atrium of old St. Peter's, likely during the pontificate of Stephen II (752–757). In its original Constantinian context, the column bust may have been displayed together with other column portraits depicting the other sons and possibly also the father in the tradition of the paired porphyry column portraits of the Tetrarchs in Venice and the Vatican.

⁷¹ *RIC* 7 Constantinople 67.

⁷² *RIC* 7 Constantinople 97.

⁷³ *RIC* 7 Antioch 689, no. 70.

⁷⁴ Varner 2015: 59–63.

⁷⁵ Rome, Musei Vaticani, Sala dei Busti, inv. 598; Ensoli and La Rocca 2000: 563–564, no. 220 (M. Bergmann and P. Liverani).

After the death of Constantine, his three surviving sons essentially present a united front in their visual representations in spite of their dynastic and political differences. Gold *solidi* issued with pearl diademed portraits of Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans at Antioch *c.* 337–340 underscore their physical similarities.⁷⁶ The iconographical similarities between the brothers is so pervasive in their surviving sculptural portraits that scholars have been unable to differentiate between the three. Authoritative catalogs such as that of Klaus Fittschen and Paul Zanker for the Capitoline Collections in Rome, or Hans Peter L’Orange and Max Wegner in the *Das Römische Herrscherlid* series generically identify these portraits as representing “sons of Constantine”.⁷⁷

A colossal head probably of Constantius II in the Palazzo dei Conservatori is emblematic of this group of portraits and like so many of the portraits of Constantine himself, it has been reconfigured from an earlier imperial colossus (Fig. 4.9).⁷⁸ The head perpetuates the idealizing and classicizing tendencies of Constantine’s portraits as well as the retrospective hair style. The configuration of locks near the ears strongly suggests that the original portrait depicted Trajan, confirming that the sons continued their father’s tradition of recycling the imperial past. Another recut portrait, from the Esquiline in Rome, is so generic that it has resisted specific identification and is assigned to either Constantine or his sons.⁷⁹ The coiffure with locks over the forehead that curve toward the center recalls the coiffure of the Constantinian colossus recut from Hadrian and Trajan. A cuirassed statue from the Baths of Maxentius and Constantine on the Quirinal hill has also been recut from a pre-existing image, likely Maxentius and it was part of a portrait gallery that included two additional cuirassed statues reconfigured as Constantine.⁸⁰ The statue is inscribed *Constantinus Caes(ar)*, and is part of a dynastic group dating to the

⁷⁶ *RIC* 8 Antioch 512–513, nos. 3–29.

⁷⁷ L’Orange and Wegner 1984; Fittschen and Zanker 1985.

⁷⁸ Palazzo dei Conservatori, Sala dei Fasti Moderni, inv. 2822; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 156–157, no. 125, pl. 156; Prusac 148, no. 321, fig. 64a–b.

⁷⁹ Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. 843; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 155–156, no. 124, pl. 155; Prusac 2011: 148, no. 312, fig. 62a–d.

⁸⁰ Rome, Campidoglio, Balustrade; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 145–147, no. 121, pls. 149–150; Prusac 2011: 128, no. 316; recarved Constantine, Rome, Campidoglio, Balustrade; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 144–145, no. 120, pls. 149–150; Varner 2004: 286, cat. 9.2, fig. 21; Prusac 2011: 148, no. 315; recarved Constantine, Ss. Giovanni in Laterano, narthex, Varner 2004: 2888, cat. 9.5; Prusac 2011: 128, no. 317, figs. 63a–c.

Fig. 4.9 Trajan?/
Constantius II, Rome,
Palazzo dei
Conservatori, Sala dei
Fasti Moderni, inv. 843.
(Source: photo author)



princiate of Constantine. Its facial features and coiffure are virtually indistinguishable from the two other recarved portraits of Constantine from the Baths. Additional reconfigured portraits in Paris and New York have been assigned to Constans, but with no real degree of certainty (Fig. 4.10).⁸¹ The identification as Constans has been prompted by their youthful physiognomies, but the coiffures of the portraits are entirely incompatible in terms of the orientation of locks over the forehead and the length of the hair on the nape of the neck. The Istanbul provenance for the New York portrait may also speak against an association of that image with Constans. Another portrait in Rome, which has holes for the attachment of a diadem and has been tentatively assigned to Constantius II

⁸¹ Muse du Louvre, MA 1021; De Kersuason 1996: 522–523; Prusac 2011: 148, no. 318; Sena Chiesa 2012: 248, no. 151 (M. Cadario); New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 67.107; Prusac 2011: 148, no. 326; Zanker 2016: 102–104, no. 32.

Fig. 4.10 Constans?,
New York, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, 67.107,
Rogers Fund purchase
1967. (Source: photo
Metropolitan
Museum of Art)



presents similar problems of identification.⁸² The difficulties inherent in the specific individuation of any of these portraits underscores the fact that individual identity is not visually stressed, rather the portraits aim to promote membership in the Constantinian dynasty and claims to legitimacy as sons and heirs of the first Constantine. Indeed, the nomenclature of all three sons, Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans further perpetuates their collective identity.

Following the deaths of Constantine II in 340 and Constans in 350, Constantius II was able to consolidate his control of the empire and he does not modify the imperial image but maintains the Constantinian orthodoxy in portraiture, perhaps initially in direct response to the usurper Magnentius, as illustrated by a *solidus* issued at Thessalonica between 355 and 360. Constantius II also appealed even more directly to the authority of his father's imagery. A *solidus* minted at Nicomedia between 351 and

⁸² Giuliano 1979: 304–306, no. 183 (S.A. Dayan).

355 depicts Constantius in three-quarter view, helmeted and wearing a cuirass and is clearly designed to evoke Constantine's earlier innovative *miliarensis* with very similar obverse imagery. Engraved sapphire portraits in Boston and Baltimore, likely of Constantius II, closely follow the portrait formats of his father's amethyst portraits and also feature the jeweled diadem, but the hair on the nape of the neck is a bit shorter than in Constantine's images.⁸³

As Fernando López-Sánchez has recently proposed, the dynastic orthodoxy presented in the numismatic portraits is still very much in play in the final years of Constantius' rule with the presentation of his Caesars, Gallus and Julian.⁸⁴ A *solidus* of Julian issued at Antioch between 355 and 360 presents Julian in the manner of "the sons of Constantine" with coiffure and portrait style directly comparable to the presentation of Constantine's heirs. As with the portraits of Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius II, the unified and traditional visual presentation of Constantius II and Julian throughout stand in opposition to the historical interpretations of outright strife between the two cousins.

The *adventus* to Rome in April 357 constituted a signal event in the reign of Constantius II and it is famously described by Ammianus Marcellinus. During his ceremonial entrance into the city, Constantius held himself in absolute stillness, so that he resembled a portrait statue.⁸⁵ The emperor in effect has become an image, with fixed gaze, jeweled appearance like statues polished by Praxiteles, in Ammianus' critical account, a *figmentum hominis*.⁸⁶ The description of jewels and purple raiment also evokes the depiction of emperors in the luxury arts, like the cameos, or the porphyry portrait of a Constantinian prince in the Vatican.⁸⁷ It is very tempting to associate the reconfiguration of the colossal marble portrait in the Palazzo dei Conservatori with Constantius' visit. During his month-long sojourn in Rome, Constantius visited the most famous sites of the capital, including the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, the Pantheon, the Stadium and Odeum of Domitian, the Theater of Pompey, the Roman Forum, Vespasian's Templum Pacis, the Temple of Venus and Roma, and the Forum of Trajan. His encounter with

⁸³ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 01.7543; Spier 2013: 19, no. 7; Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, inv 42.1008; Spier 2013: 19, no. 6.

⁸⁴ López-Sánchez 2012.

⁸⁵ Bonfante 1964.

⁸⁶ Amm. Marc. 16.10.4–10; Bonfante 1964: 414–416.

⁸⁷ Kelly 2003: 598.

the Trajanic monuments in the Forum and Market complex, and the awe they inspired, seems to have been the catalyst for the creation of an equestrian portrait in the Forum Romanum near the equestrian portraits of his father, Septimius Severus, the Arch of Septimius Severus and the Curia Julia; other portraits were also erected in the Forum.⁸⁸ The equestrian statue, dedicated by the *praefectus urbi* Naeratius Cerealis, celebrated Constantius' victory over Magnentius at Mursa in 353 and its inscription hailed the emperor as *victor ac triumphator semper Augustus* and the *extinctor pestiferae tyrannidis*.⁸⁹ Significantly, Magnentius had also employed a Constantinian coiffure in his representations in a move to confirm his imperial legitimacy, but, in an effort to differentiate himself from the depictions of Constantius and his brothers, he featured more mature and fuller facial features.⁹⁰

Constantius also finally raised the great obelisk of Thutmosis III (c. 1504–1450 BC) and Thutmosis IV (c. 1400–1390) that his father had intended to transfer from Egypt to Rome.⁹¹ Constantine had shipped it as far as Alexandria prior to his death. Constantius had a special ship constructed for transport to the capital where it was erected on the spina of the Circus Maximus, one of the most hallowed public spaces in the city. There it took its place beside the obelisk that Augustus had brought from Heliopolis in 10 BC. Augustus is also said to have contemplated moving the obelisk of Thutmosis. At 32.5 meters tall it is the tallest in Rome and the world. The obelisk is inscribed with twenty-four hexameters (six lines for each of the base's four sides).

Probably toppled in the sixth century, the obelisk lay buried in the valley of the Circus Maximus where its location was known, but it was not finally re-excavated until 1587 under Pope Sixtus V, whose architect, Domenico Fontana, re-erected it at Ss. Giovanni in Laterano in the Piazza in front of the entrance to the transept. Its pink granite base was badly

⁸⁸ *CIL* 6.1158; 1161–1162; Chioffi 1995: 227; Kelly 2003: 599–600.

⁸⁹ Wienand 2015: 195–196; Humphries 2015: 159.

⁹⁰ See, for instance, a marble portrait in Vienne, also probably recycled from a pre-existing imperial portrait; Musée Archéologique Saint Pierre, inf. NR 2001-5-51; L'Orange and Wegner 1984: 117, pl. 22c; Prusac 2011: 148, no. 327; Sena Chiesa 2012: 248–249, no. 155 (E. Calandra).

⁹¹ Although Kelly 2003: 600, suggests that like the erection of the equestrian statue in the Forum, the erection of the obelisk was a response to his visit to the Forum of Trajan, Constantius was only in Rome for a month and the whole project would have required a good deal of advance planning. In addition, the obelisk appears to have been in or near Rome long before the *adventus* of 357.

damaged, and pieces of it were used by Fontana to restore the obelisk itself, but Michele Mercati carefully recorded the inscription and published it in 1589 in *Gli Obelischi di Roma*. A model of the base, now in the Musei Vaticani, was also made, probably in the early seventeenth century, perhaps originally also with a model of the obelisk itself. Recent examination of the base, and two fragments reintegrated into the obelisk itself, help to confirm much of Mercati's original transcription, and Paolo Liverani has also suggested some plausible emendations which permit the following reading⁹²:

South side:

*Patris opus munusq[ue suum] tibi, Roma dicavit
Augustus [toto Costan]tius orbe recepto,
et quod nulla tulit tellus nec vederat aetas
condidit, ut claris exa[eque]t dona triumphis.
Hoc decus ornatum genitor cognominis Urbis
esse volens caesa Thebis de rupe revellit.*

East side:

*Sed gravior divum tangebatur cura vehendi
quod nullo ingenio nisuque manuque moveri
Caucaseam molem discurrens fama monebat.
At dominus mundi Costantius, omnia fretus
cedere virtuti, terris incedere iussit
haut partem exiguum montis pontoq[ue] tumentis*

North side:

*Crededit et placido [vexerunt aequora flu]ctu
litus ad Hesperium, [Tiberi] mirante, carinam.
Interea, Romam ta[et]tro vastante tyranno,
Augusti iacuit donum, studiumque locandi,
non fastu sprete, sed quod non crederet ullus,
tantae molis opus superas consurgere in auras.*

West side:

*Nunc veluti rursus ruff[is] avulsa metallis
emicuit pulsataque polos. Haec gloria dudum
auctori servata suo cu[m] caede tyranni
redditur atque aditu Ro[mae] vi[r]tute reperto*

⁹² CIL 6.1163 (31249) = ILS 736; Courtney 1995: 57, no. 31; Liverani 2012; Marchionni 2012–2013.

*victor ovans Urbi[ue favet sublim]e tropaeum. alt: victor ovans Urbi[que locasublime]e tropaeum
principis et munus cond[it decorat]que triumphis alt: principis et munus cond[ignis claris]que triumphis.*

Having taken control of the entire world, Constantius Augustus dedicated the work and benefaction of his father to you, Rome, and he set up that which no land had brought forth and no age had witnessed in order that his gifts would be equal to his illustrious triumphs. Desiring that this ornament confer distinction on the city bearing his cognomen, his father tore it loose from the quarried cliffs at Thebes.

But a more overwhelming anxiety for its transport took possession of the divine emperor because rumor extending in several directions warned that the rock of massive Caucasian proportions would not be moved by any ingenuity or human hand. But Constantius, lord of the world, confident that everything accedes to virtue, ordered that this trivial section of mountain advance over the lands and in the swelling sea he had faith and the waters with placid waves conveyed the ship to the Italian coast where the Tiber marveled in awe. Meanwhile, at Rome, devastated by a monstrous tyrant, the gift of the Augustus and desire to put it in place were neglected not through contempt or arrogance but on account that no one would believe that a work of such mountainous proportions would rise upwards into the upper atmosphere.

Now, as if once again torn loose from the red quarries, this glorious monument, long preserved intact flashes forth and assails the heavens and is returned/restored to its author with the slaughter of the tyrant and, access to Rome having been attained through virtue, the exulting victor, puts in place for the city the ruler's lofty victory monument and benefaction befitting his illustrious triumphs.

Poetical, and unabashedly panegyric, the inscription makes claims that are discredited by the obelisk itself, namely that it was quarried by Constantine when in fact it was quarried by Thutmose III almost two millennia earlier, or that Constantine had intended it for Constantinople and it was Constantius who changed the location to Rome, flatly denied by Ammianus and also by the Theodosian obelisk, which Constantine, and then later Julian, intended for Constantinople. The inscription, however, aligns Constantius' obelisk with the earlier obelisk of Augustus which was inscribed with identical dedications on the northern and southern faces of

its base; the allusion to a deified parent in line seven evokes “*divi f.*” in the Augustan inscription, or its reference to the obelisk as gifts worthy of the emperor’s triumphs (*dona exaeque triumphis*) at line four, or as a gift of the emperor (*Augusti...donum*) at line sixteen recall the earlier obelisk being dedicated as a gift to the sun (*soli donum dedit*).⁹³ The reference to the *donum* on the obelisk of Constantine occurs on the north side, so visually comparable to the northern inscription on the Arch of Augustus.

The hexameters are also extremely explicit in positioning the obelisk as a victory monument where it is described as a *tropaeum* at line twenty-three, and, if Liverani is correct in his emendations for the final two lines, a benefaction (*munus*) worthy of Constantius’ illustrious triumphs (*clarisque triumphis*). The spatial and notional aspects of the inscription reiterated in the first and last stanzas also emphasize Constantius’ victories and triumphs as the inscription begins on the south and proceeds counterclockwise around the monument, ending at the west. The first and last stanzas then are also physically adjacent to one another, which would have made the repeated concepts of *clara triumpha*, *tropaeum munera*, and *dona*, on a poetic, semantic, and visual levels easily legible, and the spatial relationships of the verses also recall the figurative poetry of Optatian.

The obelisk also inserts itself within a pre-existing fabric of victory monuments and celebratory portraits located along the processional route of the triumph, and later the imperial *adventus*, like that of Constantius II in 357. Although its inscription is much more reticent than that for Constantius, the Augustan obelisk does directly refer to the annexation of Egypt, and by extension Augustus’ victory at Actium (*Aegypto in potestatem/Populi Romanani redact[a]*). The Circus also contained a triumphal arch dedicated to Titus which served as its eastern entrance and through which the triumphal route passed.⁹⁴ The proximity of the obelisk to the arch would have linked the new and old Flavian dynasties too. The obelisk is also conceptually connected to additional monuments on the triumphal route, including the Colosseum, whose own inscription describes it as a manubial dedication for Titus (*ex manibus fieri iussit*),⁹⁵ or Constantine’s

⁹³ *CIL* 6.702.

⁹⁴ For a surviving fragment of helmeted soldiers’ head from the arch (Musei Capitolini, Mgazzini, inv. 29), see De Maria 1988: 119, pl. 64; substantial architectural fragments have also been recently excavated.

⁹⁵ Alföldy 1995.

triumphal arch. The Arch of Constantine's inscription refers to Constantine's victory over Maxentius as a victory over a tyrant (*tyrano*),⁹⁶ and Constantius' obelisk inscription clearly references the earlier monument and evokes a parallel victory by Constantius over Magnentius, who is twice referred to as a tyrant, as a parallel victory over a tyrant (l. 15: *vastante taetro tyranno*; l. 21: *caede tyranny*).

The obelisk links up with Constantius' equestrian statue in the Forum located along the final stretch of the triumphal route, also celebrating the victory over Magnentius. The references to a tyrant and tyranny in the inscriptions further connect the obelisk and statue, as well as the Arch of Constantine. In addition, Ammianus associates the raising of the obelisk with his account of Julian's victory at Strasbourg, and the triumphal language of the inscription describing the obelisk as a *tropaeum* for the *triumpha* of Constantius strongly suggests that its erection was also part of victory celebrations (an ovation?) in Rome under Constantius for his earlier victory over Magnentius and Julian's military successes in Gaul.⁹⁷ The inscription further leaves open the possibility that the obelisk may have been brought to Rome as early as 349, but remained prone, perhaps on the spina of the Circus itself, during Constantius' conflict with Magnentius (who had controlled the city).⁹⁸ Like the obelisk of Augustus which in part functioned as a victory monument for the annexation of Egypt, Constantius' obelisk is a *tropaeum* which positions Constantius as a new Augustus, in much the same way as the reconstituted portraits of the Constantinian emperors craft new visual identities out of those of their imperial predecessors. Furthermore, the obelisk was positioned along the spina lining it up with the pulvinar and the exedra of the imperial palace, the Domus Flavia, on the Palatine, again connecting the old and new Flavian dynasties.⁹⁹ It also allowed Constantius to forcefully inscribe himself into the monumental legacy of Rome in spectacular fashion and, like the recarved images, it connected him closely with Rome's earlier emperors, in much the same way that the retrospective elements of the new portrait orthodoxy established by his father appealed to the authority of the imperial past.

⁹⁶ *CIL* 6.1139.

⁹⁷ Marcattili 2009: 238; López-Sánchez 2012: 167.

⁹⁸ Vitiello 1999: 405–407; Marcattili 2009: 236. In addition, “Publius Victor” in the reginary catalogs refers to two obelisks at the circus Maximus in the mid-third century, one standing and one prone.

⁹⁹ Marcattili 2009: 238–239.

Fig. 4.11 Valens or Valentinian I, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1914. 273. (Source: photo author)



Ultimately, the innovative portrait strategies employed by Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century established a remarkably durable template for the image of the emperor that would remain largely unchanged throughout most of the fourth century. A head of Valens or Valentinian in the Uffizi, identified since the sixteenth century as Constantine, confirms the persistence of the Constantinian formulation for imperial images (Fig. 4.11),¹⁰⁰ as do the portraits of Theodosius I who himself would finally raise the obelisk Constantine and Julian had intended for Constantinople.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Constantine proved to cast an indomitable and enduring shadow over imperial representations, especially in their capacity to visually confirm dynastic legitimacy.

¹⁰⁰Galleria degli Uffizi, corridoio 3, inv. 1914.273; Mansuelli 1961: 129, no. 168, fig.169a–b; Romualdi and Manna 2007: 115–221. The portrait is identified by Aldrovandi as Constantine when it was in the collection of Cardinal Federico Cesi. The portrait then entered the Ludovisi collection and was sold to Ferdinando II dei Medici in 1669.

¹⁰¹One of its two Latin inscriptions indicates a clear debt to the verses on Constantius' base, which Theodosius would have had first-hand knowledge of during his sojourn in Rome in 389, Wienand 2015: 195–196.

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CHAPTER 5

The Ideology of Imperial Unity in Themistius (*Or.* 1) and Libanius (*Or.* 59)

Christine Greenlee

INTRODUCTION

Despite conflicts between the emperors, unity remained at the core of imperial ideology under the sons of Constantine.¹ In hindsight, this period represents the beginning of the Roman empire's division between East and West, but to contemporary intellectuals unity was still a prevalent theme. This chapter examines the representation of unity under the sons of Constantine with a particular focus on Themistius' and Libanius' imperial panegyrics from the 340s.² The study of the representation of

¹On the theory of ideology, see, for example, Althusser 1970: 127–186; Larrain 1979; Giddens 1983: 18–21.

²Them., *Or.* 1, see Downey 1958: 49–69; Portmann 1992: 411–421; Ballériaux 1996: 319–334; Heather and Moncur 2001: 1–96; translation in Heather and Moncur 2001:

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C. Greenlee (✉)
Sneads Ferry, NC, USA

unity will help illuminate the reign of Constantine's sons by offering a recurring theme that allows us to trace the changes in representation throughout that period and subsequently to reflect on the political and ideological nature of those changes.³ The study also allows us to ponder the bigger question of how intellectuals talked about and responded to imperial ideology in Late Antiquity.

The ideology of unity was not a fourth-century phenomenon. From Augustus' victory and the foundation of the Roman empire, unity or harmony (*concordia*) was important.⁴ Augustus was represented as the *pater patriae* on imperial coinage as well as rewarded the title by the Senate.⁵ The emperor united the Roman empire as the father united the family. By the fourth century AD, praise of unity had become a standard element in panegyrics and in imperial ideology alike.⁶ At Constantine I's tricennalia in 336, Eusebius described the three sons and the newly appointed Dalmatius as colts under the imperial yoke of their father, controlled by the reins of harmony (*συμφωνία*) and concord (*ὁμόνοια*).⁷ Although Eusebius praised the harmonious behaviour of the Caesars, he also recognised the potential strife between them when the Augustus was no longer around to lead the

78–96; only Them., *Or.* 1 is treated in this chapter. Themistius delivered several speeches to Constantius, but only *Or.* 1 is a panegyric. *Or.* 2 is a speech of thanks from November 355. For more on Them., *Or.* 2, see Leppin and Portmann 1998: 47ff. For Lib., *Or.* 59, see Petit 1950: 562–582; Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 147–209; Malosse 2001: 297–306; 2003; trans. Dodgeon in Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 164–205; Malosse 2003.

³ The panegyrics of Julian from the 350s as well as Themistius' later speeches will not be discussed at length in this chapter.

⁴ On the history of imperial unity, see Potter 2010: 13–32; on imperial ideology, see Ando 2000: 1–15, 19–48.

⁵ On images of emperor and empire, see Alföldi 1970, 1977; Bruun 1976: 122–131; Ando 2000: 206–273.

⁶ On *Concordia* in the Latin panegyrics, see, for example, Rees 2002: 60–67.

⁷ Euseb., *De Laud. Const.* 3.4: “εἴθ' ὑπὸ μίαν ζεύγλην βασιλικῷ θερίπτου τέτταρα ὑποζεύξας αὐτὸς αὐτῷ οἶά τινας πῶλους τοὺς ἀνδρειοτάτους καίσαρας ἡνίαις τε αὐτοῦ ἐνθέου συμφωνίας τε καὶ ὁμονοίας ἀρμυσάμενος, ἄνωθεν ὑψηλῶς ἡνιοχῶν ἐλαύνει, ὁμοῦ τὴν σύμπασαν ὄσσην ἥλιος ἐφορᾷ διίτπεύων, αὐτὸς τε τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐπιπαρῶν καὶ τὰ πάντα διασκοπούμενος”; “Thus, having yoked the four valiant Caesars like colts beneath the single yoke of the Imperial chariot, he controls them with the reins of holy harmony and concord. Holding the reins high above them, he rides along, traversing all lands alike that the sun gazes upon, himself present everywhere and watching over everything” (trans. Drake 1976); on Eusebius' *Tricennalia*, *De Laudibus Constantini*, see Drake 1976: 1–81.

Caesars.⁸ To Eusebius, the future harmony of the empire relied on Constantine's ability to choose a single successor, as he made clear when he spoke to the aged emperor in 336.⁹ Unfortunately, Eusebius had foreseen some of the problems that arose in May 337 when Constantine I passed away.¹⁰ Even though the sons of Constantine I had reached an agreement about the division of the empire, Constantine II especially seemed discontent with his share. In the spring of 340, Constantine II marched against his brother Constans, but died before he reached him.¹¹ This was only the beginning of brotherly conflicts in the 340s. It was during this conflict, namely in the winter of 342, that Themistius delivered his first oration before the emperor.¹² This oration signalled everything but unity between the East and the West.

THEMISTIUS AND CONSTANTIUS II AS THE SOLE RULER

Themistius was born in *c.* 317 in Paphlagonia during the reign of Constantine I the Great and Licinius.¹³ He studied literature under his father Eugenius in Constantinople and established himself as a teacher and philosopher in the late 330s and the early 340s. Themistius' *Or. 1, On Love of Mankind* or *Constantius*, delivered in Ancyra, Galatia, was his first of many encounters with the emperor Constantius II. The speech was a

⁸ See esp. the fear of civil war: Euseb., *De Laud. Const.* 3.5–6: “κάπειτα τῆς οὐρανίου βασιλείας εἰκόνη κεκοσμημένος, ἄνω βλέπων κατὰ τὴν ἀρχέτυπον ἰδέαν τοῦ κάτω διακυβερνῶν ἰθύνει, μονάρχου δυναστείας μιμήματι κραταιούμενος· τοῦτο γὰρ ἀνθρώπου φύσει τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς μόνη <ὁ> τῶν ἀπάντων δεδωρηται βασιλεύς· νόμος γὰρ οὗτος βασιλικῆς ἐξουσίας ὁ [τὴν] κατὰ πάντων μίαν ἀρχὴν ὀριζόμενος μοναρχία δὲ τῆς πάντων ὑπέγκειται συστάσεώς τε καὶ διοικήσεως· ἀναρχία γὰρ μᾶλλον καὶ στάσις ἢ ἐξ ἰσοτιμίας ἀντιπαρεξαγομένη πολυαρχία”; “Thus outfitted in the likeness of the kingdom of heaven, he pilots affairs below with an upward gaze, to steer by the archetypal form. He grows strong in his model of monarchic rule, which the Ruler of All has given to the race of man alone of those on earth. For this is the law on royal authority, the law which decrees one rule over everybody. Monarchy excels all other kinds of constitution and government. For rather do anarchy and civil war result from the alternative, a polyarchy based on equality” (trans. Drake 1976).

⁹ For Constantine's dynastic ambitions, see Barnes 2011: 144–172; Van Dam 2007: 79–129.

¹⁰ For detailed discussion of the events of 337, see Burgess 2008: 5–51; Lucien-Brun 1973: 585–602; Klein 1979: 101–150. Cf. Burgess 2008: 5–6.

¹¹ *Cod. Theod.* 11.12.1; Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 41.21; Zonar. 13.5. For a critical reappraisal of the conflict between Constantine II and Constans see the chapter by Lewis in this volume.

¹² Skinner 2015: 234–249 has recently argued for this date as well (more discussion below).

¹³ For an introduction to Themistius, see Heather and Moncur 2001: 1–29; Penella 2000: 1–50.

panegyric that praised the emperor from a philosophical standpoint and a particular focus on the emperor's clemency.¹⁴ Themistius developed a successful career under Constantius II and maintained his status under later emperors as well.¹⁵

The dating of Themistius' oration to Constantius II has been debated since Seeck in 1906 dated it to AD 350.¹⁶ The dating was done on the assumption that a speech that ignored Constans could only have been delivered after his death.¹⁷ However, this chapter will argue that Themistius did not ignore Constans because he was dead, but because of the political situation at the time of the delivery of the panegyric. The speech was delivered in Ancyra in the presence of the emperor by a young Themistius. Constantius II was likely to have been in Ancyra in 342,¹⁸ 343,¹⁹ 347,²⁰ and 349.²¹ However, given that Themistius was appointed teacher in Constantinople in 348/9, it is less likely that he would have travelled to Ancyra to deliver an oration that could have been delivered in Constantinople. This leaves the winter of 342, the fall of 343 and the spring of 347 as the most likely dates. The preface to the oration calls Themistius young (νέος) and thus favours the early date although there is no definite definition of "young".²² Themistius' mention of the war against the Persians seems to fit both the early and the late date. The absence of Constans therefore becomes central in dating the oration. In the spring of 347, Constantius II and Constans had reconciled with each other after Constans' threat of war.²³ After this date, neglect of Constans would have been incompatible with Constantius' attempt to create unity.

¹⁴On the topic of clemency in the speech, see Skinner 2015: 234–249.

¹⁵See Watts 2015: 79–81, 89–96, 174–181.

¹⁶On the date, see Seeck 1906: 293–294; see also Leppin and Portmann 1998: 27–28; Downey 1965: 4; Barnes 1993: 313 n. 21; Vanderspoel 1995: 74–76; Heather and Moncur 2001: 69–71; Skinner 2015: 234–249, esp. 238–244.

¹⁷As Vanderspoel 1995: 74–76 has observed, Constantius was in fact in Antioch in 350.

¹⁸Based on Constantius II's stay in Constantinople during the riots of 341–342, see Skinner 2015: 234–249.

¹⁹Based on a re-dating of *Cod. Theod.* 12.2.1 and 15.1.6 from 349 to 343.

²⁰This is supported by a law which indicates that Constantius was in Ancyra in March 347, see *Cod. Theod.* 11.36.8.

²¹Barnes 1993: 313 n. 21, who argues that Constantius II went to Constantinople to celebrate the *vicennalia*.

²²Οὗτος εἴρηται ἐν Ἀγκύρᾳ τῆς Γαλατίας ὅτε πρῶτον συνέτυχε τῷ βασιλεῖ νέος ὡν ἔτι διόπερ οὐδὲ πάνυ κρατεῖ τῆς ἰδέας.

²³More on the reconciliation below.

However, in 342 and 343 Constans and Constantius differed on a number of issues, including the exile of Paul, former bishop of Constantinople, the failure of the Council of Serdica, the failure to agree on the consuls for the year, the disagreement over exiles, and later threats of war.²⁴ The political atmosphere of both 342 and 343 thus fit a panegyric that only praises Constantius. However, given the uncertainty of Constantius' presence in Ancyra in 343, and taking into account Skinner's recent arguments on Themistius' discussion of clemency in *Or.* 1 as a response to Constantius' actions in Constantinople during the riots, the date of early 342 seems particularly plausible.²⁵

In the context of imperial unity, the most striking feature of Themistius' *Or.* 1 is the almost complete ignoring of Constans. Themistius was only addressing Constantius, but it was common practice to mention and sometimes even address the absent rulers.²⁶ The speech was delivered before Constantius II and an eastern audience in Galatia, in other words a context in which Constans had little influence. However, it was still the case for many of the earlier panegyrics in which absent rulers were praised, that the absent ruler had little to no connection with the speaker or the audience.²⁷ The absence of Constans in Themistius' oration therefore points towards a conscious choice on his part to compose a panegyric which refused to acknowledge the other emperor. The king (βασιλεύς) is Constantius and the king is only referred to in the singular as if no other king exists.²⁸

Themistius deliberately constructs an image of unity with Constantius as the sole ruler of the empire and expresses a vision of the single ruler bringing all his subjects together. The first reference to the supremacy of the sole ruler is in a debate about royal virtues. Themistius compares the rule of Constantius to the rule of the god and reminds the listener that the god is above all agreements and contracts, as is the emperor:

²⁴ On the conflict between Constantius and Constans, see Baldus 1984: 77–106; Barnes 1993: 68–69, 214; Portmann 1999: 301–329; Barceló 2004: 78–91; Harries 2012: 189–196. First double consulate in 346, see Portmann 1999: 307. See also Jer., *Chron.* 236e.

²⁵ Skinner 2015: 234–249.

²⁶ On the Dyarchic and Tetrarchic Latin panegyrics, see Rees 2002.

²⁷ For example, Constans in Lib., *Or.* 59.

²⁸ See, for example, Them., *Or.* 1.1a, 2a, 7a, 7c, 8a.

Furthermore, that love of mankind is a yet more royal virtue than all the rest of the company, you may learn from this. The king of the entire universe is not called wise or patient or brave. For what is fearsome to him against which he should need courage, or burdensome that he should overcome it with endurance? What kind of physical pleasures are there which he does not conquer through self-control? And if justice [lies] in contracts and partnerships between those who have entered into agreements, even this might defile in some way the god who is superior to all contract.²⁹

The context of this quotation is a discussion of royal virtues, and specifically Constantius' virtues. Themistius composes his arguments around analogies and comparisons with historical figures and with the god of the universe. Themistius specifically discusses the virtue of love of mankind (φιλανθρωπία) and argues that this is the finest of the royal virtues.³⁰ In his characterisation of the king of the entire universe, the sole god, Themistius lists general principles which apply specifically to Constantius as an emperor.³¹ In the discussion of unity, Themistius' note on the king of the universe being superior to all contracts is particularly intriguing because the empire was held together by agreements and contracts between East and West. Themistius is purposefully vague about what agreements and contracts he considers below the emperor, but agreements about consuls with another emperor could easily be included. Because of Themistius' vagueness, the effect of this statement is a powerful signal that Constantius is above any agreements or partnerships, even those negotiated with his co-emperor Constans.

Themistius continues to praise Constantius through the likeness of the one god and expands the notion of Constantius as the sole emperor. He states that as the Divine rules the heavens, so the emperor rules some

²⁹ Them., *Or.* 1.8a–b (Harduin): “Ἔτι τοίνυν ὅτι μᾶλλον βασιλικωτέρα φιλανθρωπία τοῦ λοιποῦ χοροῦ τῶν ἀρετῶν καὶ τῆδε ἂν μάθοις. ὁ τοῦ ξύμπαντος οὐρανοῦ βασιλεὺς σώφρων μὲν ἢ καρτερικὸς ἢ ἀνδρεῖος ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ὀνομάζεται· τί γὰρ ἢ φοβερὸν αὐτῷ πρὸς ὃ δεήσει τῆς ἀνδρείας, ἢ ἐπίπονον οὐ κρατήσει τῆ καρτερία; ποῖα δὲ σωμάτων ἡδοναὶ ὧν οὐχὶ ἀλίσκεται σωφροσύνη; εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἐν ξυμβολαίοις καὶ κοινωνήμασι πρὸς τοὺς ζυνημένους, τὸν θεόν καὶ τοῦτό πως ἂν ἴσως ρυπαῖνοι τὸν ὑπεράνω ζυνηθήκης πάσης” (trans. Heather and Moncur with changes). τὸν θεόν in the last line is an emendation by Hansen 1967: 114; cf. Leppin and Portmann 1998, from τὸν βίον.

³⁰ On philanthropy in the fourth century, see, for example, Downey 1955; Daly 1975: 22–40.

³¹ For example, self-restraint; see Heather and Moncur 2001: 82, 85; Vanderspoel 1995: 79.

portion of the whole realm and that the Divine favours good men like Constantius and takes away the power of lesser men:

But the man who, above all other men, is both able to and choose the good, this man is a perfect image of God and the former is on earth as the latter is in Heaven, guiding some portion of the whole realm and trying to imitate in turn the director of the whole. The good master welcomes this service and promotes his rule and entrusts him with a greater share while removing it from those who are inferior.³²

In the context of AD 342, this observation is a strong promotion of Constantius as ultimately the sole ruler of the whole Roman empire and a warning to Constantius that Constantius' divine favour will provide him with the power to gain a larger proportion of the world. Although there is no evidence that Constantius II had any expansionist wishes, Themistius still toys with the idea. This is an important sign that Themistius was free to interpret the political situation of 342 without imperial censorship of the oration.

The images Themistius uses to describe Constantius reveal much about his vision for the unity of the empire. Themistius uses four similar analogies to illustrate the emperor's role: the groom, the herdsman, the shepherd, and the huntsman.

And so, speaking generally, it should be considered that no one, neither ruler nor craftsman, will achieve success in carrying out his proper task if he does it hating and begrudging it. A groom cannot look after horses who does not love them, nor the herdsman cattle who is not familiar with the herd. That flock is ripe for the wolves whose shepherd dislikes it, and the goats reap misfortune if they are pastured by one who hates them. So too whoever pastures the flocks of mankind must love this creature. For such a man would care for it with pleasure, loving it like a child and not suspicious of it like an enemy, just as I think a bad cowherd only knows how to do a great deal of milking and to fill his pails with milk, to cheat the expectant herd of its feed, taking no heed of good pasture, and, if it should come upon

³²Them., *Or.* 1.9b–c (Harduin): “ὅστις δὲ ὑπὲρ τοῦς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους καὶ δύναται τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ προαιρεῖται, οὗτος ἄγαλμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκέραιον καὶ δλόκληρον καὶ ταῦτὸν ἐπὶ γῆς ὅπερ ἐκεῖνος ἐν οὐρανῷ, οἷον κληρὸν τινα τῆς ὅλης ἀρχῆς ἐπιτροπεύων καὶ ζηλοῦν ἐν τῷ μέρει πειρώμενος τὸν τοῦ ξύμπαντος ἡγεμόνα. ὁ δὲ ἀγαθὸς δεσπότης ἀγάμενος τῆς ὑπουργίας πρόσω τε ἄγει τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ μείζονα ἐπιτρέπει μοῖραν τῶν κακιόνων ἀφελόμενος.”

it itself, removing it, making himself fat and stout while letting the cattle waste away and weakening them. Such a man however shall enjoy his indulgence for a short time, his herd swiftly perishing and he will become a hireling instead of a herdsman, a porter perhaps or a charcoal burner, supporting himself painfully and with difficulty. But the good shepherd gains much from his work and is able to offer more in return, warding off wild beasts and looking out for healthy grass. And indeed cattle greatly love the loving herdsman in return, as dogs the huntsman, horses their horse-loving master, and the flock of mankind the king who loves mankind.³³

The common trait for the groom, the huntsman, and the herdsman is their love for their flock. This translates to Constantius' love for his subjects—his philanthropy.³⁴ However, the three images reveal slightly different aspects of the emperor's role in relation to the people. The groom (ἵππονόμος)³⁵ is dependent on the love of his horses to perform well.³⁶ The herdsman (βουφορβός)³⁷ has to have an intimate knowledge of his cattle, as the emperor must know his subjects. Themistius also points to the importance of finding pasture for the cattle and not only milking them. A

³³Them., *Or.* 1.9c–10c: “καθόλου τοίνυν ἐπισκεπτέον ὡς οὐδεὶς οὔτε ἄρχων οὔτε δημιουργὸς ἐξεργάσαιτο ἂν καλῶς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον πράττων, ἂν μισῶν πράττη καὶ δυσχεραίνων, οὐδὲ ἵππους ἂν θεραπεύσειεν ὁ μὴ φίλιππος ἵππονόμος, οὔτε βουφορβὸς τὴν ἀγέλην ὁ μὴ πρὸς τὰς βοῦς ὤκειωμένος· καὶ ποιμνιον ἐκεῖνο εὐκόλον τοῖς λύκοις ὅτω ὁ ποιμὴν ἀπεχθάνοιτο, καὶ αἰγῶν ἀτύχημα νέμεσθαι ὑπὸ μισούντος· καὶ ὅστις οὖν ἀνθρώπων ἀγέλας νομεύει, ἐρᾶν αὐτῶ ἀναγκαῖον τοῦδε τοῦ ζώου. οὗτος γὰρ ἂν αὐτοῦ μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐπιμελοῖτο, ὥσπερ τινὰ παῖδα ἀγαπῶν, οὐχ ὥσπερὶ πολέμιον ὑφορῶμενος, καθάπερ, οἶμαι, κακὸς βουκόλος πολὺ βδάλλειν μόνον εἰδὼς καὶ τοὺς γαυλοὺς ἐμπιπλάναι τοῦ γάλακτος καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀγέλης τὴν τροφήν ὑποτέμενεσθαι, νομῆς δὲ ἀγαθῆς οὐ φροντίζων, καὶ, εἰ ξυντύχοιεν, ἀφαιρούμενος, αὐτὸν μὲν πίονα κατασκευαζόμενος καὶ παχύν, τὰς βόας δὲ ἐκτῆκων τε καὶ ἐξισχναίνων. ἀλλὰ σμικρὸν ὁ τοιοῦτος χρόνον ἀπολαύσεται τῆς τρυφῆς, ταχὺ διολλυμένης αὐτῶ τῆς ἀγέλης, αὐτὸς δὲ ἔσται μισθωτὸς ἀντὶ βουκόλου, ἀχθοφόρος τις ἴσως ἢ ἀνθρακεύς, ὀδυνηρῶς καὶ μόγις παρατρεφόμενος. ὁ δὲ ἀγαθὸς νομεὺς πολλὰ μὲν ὀνίναται ἐκ τοῦ ἔργου, πλείω δὲ ἔχει ἀντωφελεῖν, θηρία τε ἀπερύκων καὶ πόας ὑγιεινῆς προορώμενος. καὶ μὲν δὴ ἀντιφιλοῦσι μάλιστα βόες μὲν ἀγαπῶντα βουκόλον, κύνες δὲ θηρευτὴν, ἵπποι δὲ τὸν φίλιππον ἐπιστάτην, αἱ δὲ ἀνθρώπιναι ποῖμαι τὸν φιλάνθρωπον βασιλέα.”

³⁴On philanthropy, see above.

³⁵Rare word—unusual for a description of a ruler.

³⁶The horses might be an echo of Plato, given Themistius' knowledge of Plato; see, for example, Vanderspoel 1989: 162–164; the image might also be a reference to Euseb., *De Laud. Const.* 3.4 and the imperial chariot, see above.

³⁷The word occurs in Euripides, see *El.* 1. 252; *IT.* 1. 237, 265, 462; Also Pl., *Plt.* 268a (Stephanus); and Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.84.7; 2.2.1.

herdsman who milks his cattle excessively will weaken them over time. Whether this is a specific reference to taxation or just a general consideration, Themistius focuses on the risk of exploitation of the subjects by the emperor. The shepherd's (ποιμήν)³⁸ task is to shield the goats or sheep from the wolves. This emphasises the emperor's task as a defender. The shepherd metaphor is remarkable for its compatibility with the Christian metaphors and shows Themistius seeking common ground with the Christians in describing the virtues of a leader.³⁹ Themistius briefly mentions the huntsman (θηρευτής) as a fourth metaphor for the imperial office. As opposed to the cattle, the horses, and the sheep, the dogs are more aggressive and might thus refer to Constantius' relationship with his army.⁴⁰ However, the role of all four is to take care of his flock of sheep, cattle, or horses, or his pack of dogs. He is to protect them from the wolves, nurture them, and find food for them. Again, it is remarkable how the groom, the huntsman, and the herdsman all perform their tasks by themselves and only in relation to their flock. Themistius thus creates an image of Constantius as the care-taker of his subjects with no responsibilities to other rulers. It is a representation of unity between ruler and subjects promoted by the ruler's love of mankind, not the ruler's love for his co-ruler.

Another striking feature of Themistius' first oration is the use of Dio Chrysostom's *Kingship Orations*.⁴¹ Themistius had a broad knowledge of Greek literature and the choice to emulate Dio was both innovative and in tone with the greater message of Themistius' oration.⁴² As Heather and Moncur note, Themistius' panegyric was very different from other panegyrics in the fourth century. Not only did it ignore central themes as birth and ancestors, but it also only dealt with the military achievements briefly. The main focus for Themistius was to offer a philosopher's praise to his

³⁸The good shepherd in Christian thought, see Jn. 10.11–18, 21.15–17 and Ramsey 1983: 375–378. In Greek thought, Hermes gains the epithet “ram-bearer” (κροφόρος), see Muller 1944: 87–90. See also its extensive use in Dio Chrys., *Or.* 1.13, 17–20, 28; *Or.* 3.41; *Or.* 4.43–44. Cf. Heather and Moncur 2001: 87–88.

³⁹Downey 1962: 480–488; Heather and Moncur 2001: 88; on Constantius and the pagans, see Bradbury 1994: 120–139; Leppin 1999: 457–480.

⁴⁰On Constantius and his generals, see Blockley 1980: 467–486.

⁴¹See Heather and Moncur 2001: 7–9.

⁴²On Themistius' knowledge of literature, see Colpi 1987: 194. Cf. Heather and Moncur 2001: 9.

king. Most of the allusions to Dio refer to the relationship between Themistius and Constantius, portraying Themistius as Dio the philosopher and Constantius II as Trajan.⁴³ This parallel is noteworthy in the context of unity as Trajan was a sole ruler. Trajan was in Dio's *Kingship Orations* the image of the good emperor and contrasted with the tyrannical rule of Domitian.⁴⁴ However, the tyrant in Themistius' panegyric is not of the past, but a constant threat to the good ruler. The tyrant is characterised as someone who fails to find the true higher being,⁴⁵ one who is a slave to his passions,⁴⁶ is like the Persian King,⁴⁷ fails to judge correctly,⁴⁸ and discards close friends.⁴⁹ Many of these matters were central in the conflict between Constantius and Constans—they disagreed on matters of religion, law, and appointments. This observation along with Themistius' comment that good rulers will eventually get a bigger portion of the realm point towards the conclusion that in Themistius' *Or.* 1, Constantius is the good ruler and Constans, by implication although he is never named, is the tyrant.⁵⁰ This is never explicitly affirmed by Themistius, but matters like these needed subtle hints and comments, especially when coming from a young speaker like Themistius.

Themistius' panegyric paints a picture of Constantius as the sole ruler of the world and it does not promote the idea of unity between the two emperors. Constans was unwilling to embrace unity, but so was Constantius in this period of time. Themistius' oration shows a response to a government which rather than promoting unity is toying with the idea of permanently splitting the realm, thus making Constantius sole ruler of his part of the world. The political conflicts in the first half of the 340s thus had ideological implications for the idea of unity as it rapidly became an unpopular theme amongst panegyrists.

⁴³ See, for example, Them., *Or.* 1.2a. Cf. Dio Chrys., *Or.* 3.91–95; Them., *Or.* 1.3c. Cf. Dio Chrys., *Or.* 3.17–24. Cf. Heather and Moncur 2001: 78–80.

⁴⁴ Possible reference to Domitian in Them., *Or.* 8d. Cf. Heather and Moncur 2001: 86, n. 116.

⁴⁵ Them., *Or.* 1.3b, in contrast to Constantius who knew the right religious stance.

⁴⁶ Them., *Or.* 1.6a, as opposed to Constantius who exceeded in self-control.

⁴⁷ Them., *Or.* 1.11b–c.

⁴⁸ Them., *Or.* 1.13a–b.

⁴⁹ Them., *Or.* 1.17d.

⁵⁰ On the tyrant discourse, see Malosse 2006: 157–178.

LIBANIUS AND BROTHERLY UNITY

Libanius was born in *c.* 314 in Antioch.⁵¹ He fell in love with the art of rhetoric at the age of fifteen and after a period of study in Antioch, he moved to Athens where he studied from 336 to 340 as the empire was undergoing great changes. Libanius repeatedly encountered hostility from fellow sophists and in the aftermath of the riots in Constantinople in 341–342, he was forced to leave his teaching position in Constantinople to go to Nicaea and later Nicomedia.⁵² Libanius stayed in Nicomedia for five years (343–348) and experienced a calm and productive period that enabled his return to Constantinople in 348.

Libanius' praise for the two emperors, *Or.* 59, was delivered in Nicomedia between 346 and 348.⁵³ Considering Libanius' and Themistius' friendship he might have even known about Themistius' panegyric to Constantius.⁵⁴ Neither Constantius II nor Constans was present for this panegyric. Libanius had been asked by a government official to compose and deliver the oration.⁵⁵ The *topos* of the oration was the dual praise of the emperors which Libanius emphasised early on in the oration.⁵⁶ When considering this in relation to the topic of imperial ideology the context is

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion of Libanius' life, see Wintjes 2005.

⁵² On the accusations which forced Libanius to leave Constantinople, see Van Hoof 2014: 28–33.

⁵³ On the date, see Portmann 1989: 1–18; Wiemer 1994: 512–513; Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 161–164, arguing for 344; see Malosse 2002: 297–306, arguing for 346; see Förster: 201; Sievers 1868: 52–56; Callu 1987: 136, arguing for 348.

⁵⁴ On Libanius and Themistius, see Bouchery 1936; Libanius' network, see Cabouret 2002: 15–27; Bradbury 2004a, 2004b: 73–80; for Libanius' information for the oration, see also Petit 1950: 562–582; Malosse 2000b: 172–187.

⁵⁵ The official was most likely Philippus. For scholarship on the occasion, see Callu 1987: 133–152, arguing for the imperial celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Constantius II; Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 158, arguing for the performance as an act of friendship to Libanius from the Praetorian Prefect Philippus; Malosse 2003 is silent on the matter.

⁵⁶ Lib., *Or.* 59.6: “οὐ γὰρ μόνον τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ὅσον ἕξει τοῦ γιγνομένου φυλάζομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ δόξαν ἴσως προσληψέθα βελτίω καὶ τῷ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν προβαλόντι φιλοτιμηθῆναι παρέξομεν. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς γυμνικοῖς ἀγῶσιν εἰς τοὺς παιδοτρίβας ἔρχεται τι τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν στεφάνων εὐκλείας, οὕτως ὁ τοῦ λόγου συναίτιος κοινωνεῖ τῆς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ φιλοτιμίας”; “But the proposer of the contest showed equal love for both men [i.e. Constantius II and Constans] and did not consider our powers rather than how on one occasion both emperors might be included, and in short was not able to separate fairly for eulogy those who were united both by natural disposition and by temperament and virtues. How can we avoid falling far short of the measure of praise, as we would if we tried to measure earth and sea in a single day?” (trans. Dodgeon).

particularly significant for what it tells us about the way imperial ideology was communicated. First, discourse on imperial ideology was not dependent on the presence of the emperors or their knowledge of the exact wording of the praise. There is no sign that Constantius II and Constans ever read Libanius' panegyric. The panegyric was intended for a local audience and reflects imperial ideology in a local context. However, the presence of the imperial official made the contents of the oration available for the imperial court so even though Libanius primarily addressed a local audience, the court was a potential secondary audience. This is not to say that the speech was a communication between subjects and rulers.⁵⁷ It was a communication between subjects about the rulers, and engaged with the language of power which was available at the time. Second, the delivery of imperial panegyrics without the presence of the emperor shows the need for forming a narrative about the emperors which was largely built on information received about them, but then reframed as the sophist saw fit. Most likely, the information which Libanius used to write *Or.* 59 was gathered from men close to the emperor. The best indicator of that is the correspondence between Libanius and Julian in which Libanius requests detailed information in order to write a praise of Julian.⁵⁸ This strongly suggests the relative independence of Libanius in constructing his narrative about the two emperors. Third, the speech must have been sponsored by an official or at least a man wealthy enough to host public orations, although we cannot identify him with certainty.⁵⁹ The official's interest in dual praise of Constantius II and Constans was so strong that he requested the speakers to follow that one principle in their panegyrics. This acute interest in praising two, rather than one, emperors is particularly relevant in contrast to Themistius' panegyric from 342. In late 346, the situation was very different. The two emperors were reconciled and they took a number of initiatives to show this new-found unity of the empire: they struck coinage and they acknowledged problematic consulates. The recreation of unity was also reflected in imperial coinage with the motive of a Phoenix along with the wording *fel temp reparatio*.⁶⁰ The shared image of the Phoenix along with the promise of the restoration of joyful times was

⁵⁷ As suggested of Latin panegyrics by Sabbah 1984: 363–388.

⁵⁸ See below on Lib., *Ep.* 610.

⁵⁹ Likely the Praetorian Prefect Philippus, see Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 158.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Constantius' coinage: Antioch *RIC* 8 129A, 129H, 129Z and Constantinople *RIC* 8 93A, 93I, 93var, 93B, 93v; Constans' coinage: Arles *RIC* 8 100, 109 and Siscia *RIC* 8 228, 232, 242.

a part of the emperors' re-emerging ideal of unity. Along with that, the East started minting coinage with Constans and the West minting coinage with Constantius. I suggest that Libanius' panegyric was a part of the restoration of the image of imperial unity taking place after 346.

The structure of *Or.* 59 reveals the difficulty in creating a narrative of unity in the mid-fourth century. The first part of the oration is dedicated to both emperors as Libanius considers their shared ancestors, their father and their royal upbringing. However, the omissions from this section show the problems with proving unity as their half-brother Crispus, the massacre of 337, and their former co-ruler Constantine II are all left out. The next section then considers Constantius II on his own and in relation to his father Constantine. This section is an astonishing 5274 words and it is within this section that Libanius places the most detailed and vivid *ekphrasis* of imperial victory.⁶¹ The next section is supposed to be a parallel account of Constans' success as an emperor, but it pales in comparison with only 1746 words.⁶² The final section of the oration praises the joint rule of the two emperors and focuses particularly on the harmony of their government and their legislative politics. The asymmetry in praise has several explanations, including difficulty accessing information and a lack of interest in the western emperor in the East. Keeping in mind the unevenness of the structure in favour of the closest emperor, I will now discuss the two sections in which Libanius praises the unity of the emperors.⁶³

Part of Libanius' introductory praise is traditionally composed as a praise of the birth and upbringing of Constantius II and Constans. However, first they receive praise under the alleged saying of Plato that "they were born good because they were sprung from good stock".⁶⁴ In this section, Constantius I Chlorus and Constantine are considered as their shared dynastic predecessors. Libanius then moves on to describe the birth of the two brothers. His approach to the birth of Constantius II and Constans is one of alleged historical accuracy combined with an explicitly

⁶¹ On structure, see Malosse 2003: 14; for the description of the battle of Singara, see Lib., *Or.* 59.99–119; cf. the structure of Julian's *Epitaphios*, Felgentreu 2007: 53–68.

⁶² Malosse 2003: 14.

⁶³ Lib., *Or.* 59.10–49 and 150–173.

⁶⁴ Lib., *Or.* 59.10: "λεγέσθω δὴ τὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐπ' αὐτοῖς μᾶλλον τοῦτοις ἢ 'κείνοις πρέπον εἰς οὐδ' εἴρηται, ὅτι ἀγαθοὶ δὲ ἐγένοντο διὰ τὸ φῦναι ἐξ ἀγαθῶν."

negative judgement concerning mythological narratives of the emperors.⁶⁵ By doing so, Libanius attempts to establish his narrative as historically reliable despite the important omission of the brothers Constantine II and Crispus from the oration. To Libanius' argument for unity, the birth is the first element which ties the two emperors intrinsically together and it would be impossible to follow through with this argument if he included the other family members. Both Constantine II and Crispus suffered from *damnatio memoriae*. Libanius' incorporation of this imperial censorship in his oration is an example of his close engagement with the language of power. Libanius subjects himself to the information censored by the imperial court, but in a creative way which shows his skills as a panegyrist.⁶⁶

The next element Libanius brings forth is the education (παιδεία)⁶⁷ of the two emperors.⁶⁸ As a teacher, this *topos* was appealing to Libanius.⁶⁹ However, it is remarkable that in Libanius' narrative, Constantius II and Constans do not have a professional teacher, but they are mostly educated by their father Constantine.

⁶⁵ See esp. Lib., *Or.* 59.25: “ὁ δὲ τῶν ἡμετέρων βασιλέων τόκος οὐ μύθων οὐδὲ ἐνυπνίων πρὸς κόσμον ἐδεήθη, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν σωματίων οἴκοθεν κεκτημένα τὸ φαίδρον οὐκ ἐφέλκεται τὴν ἕξωθεν ὥραν, οὕτως ἡ τῶνδε γενεαὶς πάντα ὑπερβᾶσα λόγον ἀλλόκοτον αὐτῇ μόνῃ πρὸς σεμνότητα κέχρηται”; “Whereas the birth of our emperors does not require stories or dreams for its embellishment, but just as the fairest of bodies obtain their bright sparkle from within and do not carry their lustre from an outside source, so the generation of these surpasses every strange tale and has required only itself to provide its dignity” (trans. Dodgeon). See also Lib., *Or.* 59.26–31.

⁶⁶ Julian mentions Constantine II in his panegyric to Constantius, see, for example, *Or.* 1.18c: “ὅτι τοῦ τρίτου μορίου τῆς ἀρχῆς κύριος καθεστῶς οὐδαμῶς πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον ἐρρῶσθαι δοκοῦντος, οὐχ ὄπλοις, οὐκ ἀνδράσι τοῖς στρατευομένοις, οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα πρὸς τηλικούτων πόλεμον ἐχρῆν ἐπιρρεῖν ἄφθονα, πρὸς τούτοις δὲ οὐδὲ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σοι δι’ ἀσθηποτοῦν αἰτίας τὸν πόλεμον ἐλαφρυνόντων (καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς οὕτως ἀναίσχυντος οὐδὲ βᾶσκανος συκοφάντης, ὃς οὐκ αἰτιώτατον γενέσθαι σὲ τῆς πρὸς ἐκείνους ὁμονοίας φήσει)”; “You became master of a third of the empire, that part in fact which seemed by no means strong enough to carry on a war, since it had neither arms nor troops in the field, nor any of those military resources which ought to flow in abundantly in preparation for so important a war. Then, too, your brothers, for whatever reason, did nothing to make the war easier for you. And yet there is no sycophant so shameless and so envious as not to admit that the harmony existing between you was mainly due to you” (trans. Wright). See also Ahl 1984: 174–208.

⁶⁷ On *paideia*, see Lib., *Or.* 59.32, 35, 37, 39, 57.

⁶⁸ For *paideia* in the fourth century, see, for example, Colpi 1987; Henck 2001; Gibson 2011: 69–78.

⁶⁹ Concerning Libanius as a teacher, see esp. Criboire 2001, 2007, 2009: 233–245.

But both our emperors are clever in the skill of words that befit Romans after acquiring the best guides of their generation, while they did not have to search for a teacher of imperial knowledge; they had close at hand their father himself, who did not intend to conceal out of envy the timely opportunities for knowledge—for he was by nature superior to such a vice.⁷⁰

Constantine I thus becomes the most influential man in shaping both the minds and bodies of the two young emperors, according to Libanius. This largely corresponds with earlier visions for the sons of Constantine as heirs of their father's greatness. It also supports the vision of the emperors as united in brotherly love and shared upbringing, bound together by their father, and gives Constantine I a central ideological role under Constantius II and Constans. Libanius closes this section cleverly by claiming that it was in fact also Constantine I who ultimately separated the two Caesars by assigning Constantius II the East and Constans the West.⁷¹ In this way, Libanius explains the physical separation of the Augusti, provides dynastic legitimacy of this form of rule, and brings the empire unity through Constantine I:

[Constantine I] despatched them for such considerations, while they desired to remain through longing for their father; but as they dared not offer resistance they hastened on to where they had to go.⁷²

It is their shared longing for their father, not longing for each other, that unites Constantius II and Constans. This idea corresponds with Eusebius' vision for the empire united under Constantine.

⁷⁰ Lib., *Or.* 59.34: “ἀλλ’ οἳ γε ἡμέτεροι βασιλεῖς ἄμφω δεξιοὶ κατὰ τὴν τέχνην λόγων μὲν τῶν Ῥωμαίοις προσηκόντων ἡγεμόνας ἐπαγαγόμενοι τοὺς ἀρίστους τῶν τότε, βασιλικῆς δ’ ἐπιστήμης οὐ ζητήσαντες διδάσκαλον, ἀλλ’ ἐγγύθεν ἔχοντες αὐτὸν τὸν φυτεύσαντα, ὃς οὔτε φθόνῳ κρύψειν ἔμελλε τῆς ἐπιστήμης τὰ καίρια, τὸ γὰρ τῆς φύσεως οἰκεῖον τοῦ νοσήματος ἰσχυρότερον, οὔτ’ ἀπειρία βλάψει τοὺς ἀγομένους, οὐδεὶς γὰρ πορρωτέρω βασιλικῆς ἐμπειρίας ἦλασεν” (trans. Dodgeon).

⁷¹ Lib., *Or.* 59.43: “Ἐπεὶ δ’ οὖν ἐδόκουν τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν συνουσίας ἀπολεαυκέναι τὰ γιγνώμενα, καθάπερ τις ἀετὸς τοὺς νεοττοὺς εἰς πτήσιν γυμνάζων, οὕτως ἤδη δυνάμεις παραδοὺς ἐξέπεμψε τὸν μὲν τῆς ἑώρας, τὸν δὲ τῆς ἑσπέρας προβαλλόμενος”; “So when they seemed to have had the benefit of his company for the time being, just as an eagle trains its nestlings for flight, so he now handed over their powers and despatched them, one to guard the East and the other to guard the West” (trans. Dodgeon).

⁷² See, for example, Lib., *Or.* 59.46: “Ὁ μὲν δὴ τοιοῦτοις τοῖς λογισμοῖς ἐξέπεμπεν, οἱ δὲ πόθῳ μὲν τοῦ πατρὸς μένειν ἐπεθύμουν, τῷ δὲ μὴ τολμᾶν ἀντιτείνειν οἱ βαδίζειν ἐχρῆν ἡπείγοντο.”

After the separate sections on Constantius II and Constans,⁷³ Libanius again brings together the brothers in a praise of their joint government. The core of the joint government is harmony—a harmony both between the emperors and their subjects and between the emperors themselves.⁷⁴ Of particular interest is the attempt to establish the vision of a joint administration in which each emperor might govern the whole empire despite a geographical division. In this argument, the physical communication between the East and the West seems to be the most important element in keeping the empire concordant:

But now all the ancient time has been reversed, and every spiteful eye of envy has been expelled, and an unbreakable bond of friendship unites the souls of the emperors. Their government has been divided by area but is held together by goodwill, and the title of their kinship is confirmed by their deeds. They are so far removed from smarting at each other's prosperity that each withdraws from the first place in favour of the other. Horses and chariots every day, increasing their speed with successions of teams, carry news of each other's thoughts to one another. And each man of those sent out passes through each administration with equal authority. The place where the divisions of the empires are joined is guarded not by the continual presence of armies, but by the immovable strength of trust without guile.⁷⁵

Libanius' representation of unity is expanded in this section. Not only are the emperors united in their brotherly love, they are also united through friendship and joint governments. The division of the empire is not important as the emperors have equal authority in East and West. Each emperor voluntarily gives up authority in the other's part of the realm. However, this does not result in division, because of the quick transportation of

⁷³The praise of Constantius II, see Lib., *Or.* 59.50–123; praise of Constans, see Lib., *Or.* 59.124–149.

⁷⁴See esp. Lib., *Or.* 59.150, with an interesting medical metaphor.

⁷⁵Lib., *Or.* 59.152: “ἀλλὰ νῦν ἅπας μὲν ὁ παλαιὸς χρόνος ἤττηται, ἅπας δὲ φθόνου χαλεπὸς ὀφθαλμὸς ὑπερώρισται, φιλίας δὲ σύνδεσμος ἀρραγῆς τὰς τῶν βασιλέων συνέχει ψυχάς. ἡ δὲ ἀρχὴ τοῖς μὲν τόποις διήρηται, ταῖς δὲ εὐνοίαις συνάπτεται, καὶ τὸ τῆς οικειότητος ὄνομα πιστοῦται τοῖς ἔργοις. τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἀπέχουσι τοῦ τοῖς ἀλλήλων ἀγαθοῖς ἀλγεῖν, ὥστε ἐκάτερος θατέρῳ τῶν πρωτείων ἀφίσταται. ἵπποι δὲ καὶ τέτρωρα παρ' ἡμέραν ταῖς διαδοχαῖς τὸ τάχος ἐπιτείνοντα τὰς ἐκατέρων παρ' ἀλλήλους διαπορθμεύει γνώμας. καὶ τῶν ἐκπεπομένων ἕκαστος δι' ἰσῆς τῆς ἐξουσίας ἐκατέραν ἀρχὴν ἐπέρχεται. τὸν δὲ χώρον ἐν ᾧ τὰ τῶν βασιλείων τμήματα συγκεράννυται οὐ στρατοπέδων φρουρεῖ καθέδρα συνεχῆς, ἀλλ' ἀδόλου πίστεως ἰσὺς ἀκίνητος” (trans. Dodgeon).

information between the two parts. The communication between East and West ensures that the emperors always know the events and decision in the whole empire. There are thus no borders between East and West, but only a practical division of the administration because of the size of the empire. Furthermore, Libanius claims that Constantius and Constans share thoughts on administration and government through this communication as well. Frequent exchange of letters seems likely, particularly given Libanius' own letter production which shows a well-established communication system throughout the empire.⁷⁶

The discourse on the joint rule of Constans and Constantius is further developed later in the speech as Libanius proves his point by going over a series of joint laws; one a marriage law which protected women against abuse and one which secured the farmers from secondary commissioners.⁷⁷ The law seems to be central in imagining a united empire with multiple emperors.⁷⁸ Although according to Libanius the emperors sometimes overrule the laws, it is clear that an empire must share most legislation as a sign of concord.⁷⁹ This is reflected in the practise of all emperors issuing laws even if the law was only enforced in parts of the empire.⁸⁰ The importance of adhering to agreements and legislation for both emperors differs from Themistius' portrayal of Constantius. Themistius argued for an emperor who was above the law, whereas Libanius claims that the adherence to the laws is actually at the centre of the issues of unity among the emperors.⁸¹ After praising the two Augusti for bringing together all the parts of the empire, Libanius closes with a musical metaphor that captures his vision for the empire—a chorus in harmony.⁸²

Libanius' praise combines two features in portraying imperial unity, namely Constantius II and Constans as bound together as sons of

⁷⁶ See the chapter by Nicholas Baker-Brian in the volume.

⁷⁷ Lib., *Or.* 59.157–159. See also Wytzes 1978: 1334–1340.

⁷⁸ Libanius predicts the future union of the East and West through the *Cod. Theod.* See Harries 1999: 59–64.

⁷⁹ See a similar idea in Them., *Or.* 1.15b.

⁸⁰ Earlier examples, see, for example, the “Price Edict” of Diocletian.

⁸¹ See also Julian's letter to Themistius; for an analysis, see Watt 2012: 91–104.

⁸² Lib., *Or.* 59.172: “καὶ τί δεῖ μικρολογεῖσθαι καθ' ἕκαστον, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ μίαν εἰς ἅπαντα φωνὴν ἀφεῖναι, ὅτι νῦν τὰ σωφρονοῦντα τῆς οἰκουμένης γένη καθάπερ ἐν χορῶ μίαν ἁρμονίαν ντεινάμενα συνάδει δύο κορυφαίων ἐνδιδόντων τὸ μέλος”; “Why must I deal in minute detail with each case and not rather utter one statement to cover them all? Now the sensible nations of the world, as though pitching one harmony in chorus, are singing together as their two chorus leaders strike up the tune” (trans. Dodgeon).

Constantine and the two emperors practically combining their administrative governments. Interestingly, their military victories are not a matter of shared praise, but the point which separates them in their individual praise. Constantius II is praised for his war with the Persians.⁸³ The description of the battle of Singara is the dramatic highlight of the oration with a very detailed narrative and *ekphrasis*.⁸⁴ Constans receives praise for his war with the Franks, but there is no great battle narrative.⁸⁵ When brought together, the praise of the military victories shows the vastness of the empire and explains the need for two emperors to defend the borders of the united empire. The defence of the empire brings the emperors together. This is markedly different from Themistius' representation of unity under a sole ruler who was above any agreements or contracts. The difference shows how the political situation had changed from 343 to 348 and how the orators adapted their representation of unity to correspond with the situation.

Libanius' image of unity corresponds well with the re-establishment of harmony between the two emperors. The panegyric reflects the new ideology of both Constantius and Constans in the late 340s. However, the oration does more than just reflect the new ideology. It contributes to the imperial discourse on unity. The official who initially requested the dual praise would have worked in the interest of the government to promote the image of unity. Libanius responded to this request not only as a way to show his understanding of the political environment but also as a way to promote his skills as a praise-giver in a local context. The result was a narrative which dealt with the problem of bridging reality and ideology of the two emperors' joint rule.

CONCLUSION

Imperial ideology under the sons of Constantine was shaped to fit the political circumstances throughout their reign. Under the reign of their father Constantine I, the three sons were portrayed as a family who harmoniously served their father. However, in the early 340s this idea was abandoned as the conflicts between Constantius II and Constans grew

⁸³ Lib., *Or.* 59.73–120.

⁸⁴ Lib., *Or.* 59.99–119; compare with Julian., *Or.* 1.18–20. On *ekphrasis*, see Webb 2003: 127–135; on narrative, see Rees 2010: 105–121.

⁸⁵ Lib., *Or.* 59.131–141.

deeper. Themistius' panegyric reflects the collapse of unity between the two brothers and Libanius' panegyric delivered in 348 shows how the imperial ideal of concord was modified after 346 as Libanius re-instated the idea of brotherly unity and the importance of family.

The panegyrics do not only reflect the change in the political circumstances. They also communicate a change in ideologies. Scholarship has offered many interpretations of the role epideictic oratory plays within the apparatus of imperial ideology.⁸⁶ I suggest that imperial panegyrics in Late Antiquity must be considered responses to court-controlled imperial ideology. This is purposefully a broad definition in that each panegyric must be considered in its own context, that is, place of delivery, audience, speaker, historical circumstances, and so on. There was no reason why the government would have to force a panegyrist to engage with current ideological *topoi* because a skilled orator would by himself seek as much information as possible about the recent deeds of their subject. This behaviour is evident from Libanius' correspondence with Julian about *Or.* 13:

I have sent you a small oration on great matters. You certainly have it in your power to make the oration even greater, if you give me the material for it to grow. If you do, you will show that you regard me as a craftsman of panegyric; if not, you will give reason to suspect the contrary.⁸⁷

Libanius writes directly to the emperor requesting material for his panegyric, noting that the best imperial panegyrists were well informed.⁸⁸ For a panegyrist to gain new and exclusive information about the emperor's ideology would give the panegyrist an advantage before his audience and before other orators. Epideictic oratory is thus a very valuable, yet complicated, source for the imperial ideology at a given time.

Considering imperial panegyrics as responses to imperial ideology forces the modern reader to examine the orations as mostly free from

⁸⁶ See, for example, Klotz 1911: 513–572; Mesk 1912: 569–590; Maguinness 1932: 42–61; Vereecke 1975: 141–160; Sabbah 1984: 363–388; Mause 1994; Nixon and Rodgers 1994; Whitby 1998; Malosse 2000a: 243–263; 2002: 165–174; Rees 2002, 2007: 136–148; 2012: 3–48; Enenkel 2005: 1–12; Ronning 2007, on scholarship; Lopetegui 2013: 189–208.

⁸⁷ Lib., *Ep.* 610 (N93): “Ἐπεμψά σοι τὸν λόγον μικρὸν ὑπὲρ μεγάλων πραγμάτων. τοῦ δὲ καὶ μείζω γενέσθαι λόγον σὺ δήπου κύριος, εἰ δοίης ἄφ’ ὧν ἂν γένοιτο μείζων. δοῦς μὲν οὖν δηλώσεις ὅτι με τεχνίτην ἐγκωμίων ἡγῆ μὴ δοῦς δὲ δώσεις ἔτερα ὑποπτεύειν” (trans. Norman 1992).

⁸⁸ Libanius under various emperors, see Pack 1947: 17–20; Wiemer 1995a, 1995b: 89–130; 2011: 127–158; Swain 2004: 355–400; Wintjes 2005.

government control, but at the same time as engaged with the language of power. It is thus not a product of propaganda or a means of communicating imperial ideology. It is the intellectual's own narrative about and vision for the empire. The speaker was flexible and creative in his responsiveness to the ideology, bound only by rhetorical conventions and his own knowledge about the state of affairs.⁸⁹ This diplomatic independence even allowed for the panegyrist to be subtly critical and to present his vision for the empire.

Eusebius, Themistius, and Libanius show creative and intelligent ways of responding to the imperial ideology of unity. Each approaches the problem differently when attempting to close the gap between ideology and reality. They also bear witness to a culture of responsiveness and engagement in political as well as ideological matters. Epideictic oratory was a way for the empire's intellectuals to address the problems of disintegration and disunity, such as those triggered by the actions of its rulers.

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⁸⁹For example, the rhetorical conventions in Menander Rhetor, see Russell and Wilson 1981.

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CHAPTER 6

The Memory of Mursa: Usurpation, Civil War, and Contested Legitimacy Under the Sons of Constantine

Mark Humphries

INTRODUCTION

From its outset, the era of the sons of Constantine was characterised by bloody struggles for power and fierce contestations of legitimacy. When Constantine I himself died on 22 May 337, the succession of his three sons—Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans—was achieved only by, to use Richard Burgess’ pungent phrase, a “summer of blood” orchestrated by Constantius II, in which all serious rivals for the throne were eliminated.¹ That this move was deemed necessary reflects uncertainties about the succession already in the period leading up to Constantine I’s death. In his last years as emperor, perhaps owing to age and a weakening grip over various court factions, he had left a great deal open to question:

¹ Burgess 2008.

M. Humphries (✉)
Department of Classics, Ancient History, and Egyptology, Swansea University,
Swansea, UK
e-mail: m.humphries@swansea.ac.uk

not only were his three sons marked out as potential successors by elevation to the rank of Caesar, but also members of the family of his father Constantius I and stepmother Theodora occupied roles of varying importance, with one of them, Dalmatius, also designated as Caesar.² In the 337 purge, Dalmatius and other members of the family of Theodora were assassinated. Thereafter, and having met in Pannonia to divide the responsibilities of government, Constantius II and his brothers made ostentatious efforts to affirm their legitimate succession, for instance, by minting consecration coinages for their father.³ The degree to which this rewriting of the arrangements for the succession came to be accepted can be seen within two years of the event, when Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Life of Constantine*, painted an irenic picture of how it had all been managed: far from leaving any ambiguity, the old emperor had made careful arrangement for the instruction of his sons in their duties as Christian rulers.⁴ Earlier complications relating to the succession, such as the fall of Crispus in 326, were simply passed over in silence.⁵

Such power struggles, and the propaganda efforts that accompanied them, did not end there. Three years after Constantine I's death, Constantine II and Constans came to civil war, as the former invaded the Italian territories of the latter in an effort to displace him.⁶ This proved to be a disastrous miscalculation on Constantine II's part: Constans prevailed, not only defeating his brother in battle (in the course of which Constantine II was killed) and acquiring his territories in Britain, Gaul, and Spain but also taking measures to eradicate his brother's memory.⁷ Thereafter, Constans' relations with his remaining brother were far from harmonious. A story told by the ecclesiastical historian Socrates that Constans threatened civil war on Constantius if he did not restore bishops Athanasius of Alexandria and Paul of Constantinople to their sees is

²For speculation about Constantine's infirmity late in his reign, see Harries 2012: 187. Burgess 2008: 7–9, 43–45, however, regards Constantine as planning a new, dynastic Tetrarchy, although he admits that Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans never accepted Dalmatius as Caesar.

³Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.73, with Cameron and Hall 1999: 348–350.

⁴Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.52.1 and 63.3, with commentary in Burgess 2008: 11–12.

⁵As can be seen in passages based on Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.*, from which Crispus' name has been excised: Cameron and Hall 1999: 230, 237, 273–274.

⁶For detail and discussion see the chapter by Lewis in this volume.

⁷*Cod. Theod.* 11.12.1 condemns Constantine II as a public enemy (*publicus ac noster inimicus*) and nullifies any immunities granted by him. His name was removed from inscriptions, and otherwise obliterated from public commemoration: Maraval 2013: 44–45.

perhaps fictitious—but rumblings of tension are discernible in the mid-340s when, for instance, Constans twice declined to recognise the consuls appointed in his brother's half of the empire.⁸ In 350, Constans was overthrown by Magnentius, ushering in another round of civil war as Constantius II sought to re-impose Constantinian rule on the western provinces, a process that will be discussed in more detail below. Yet his final victory over Magnentius in 353 did not guarantee future stability. In 355, Silvanus, *magister peditum* in Gaul, was accused of fomenting rebellion.⁹ Five years after that, the Caesar Julian, whom Constantius had installed as a Constantinian figurehead in Gaul, was similarly suspected of plotting to usurp power with the backing of the Gallic armies; a year later, he would effectively declare war on his cousin Constantius, and only the latter's sudden death on 3 November 361 prevented another round of civil conflict.¹⁰

This litany of crises makes it clear that episodes of civil war and usurpation were a significant feature of the Roman empire under the sons of Constantine: after all, two of them fell victim to such conflicts, and the third died on the brink of a further confrontation. Such episodes not only put the cohesion of the empire at risk¹¹; their frequency also suggests that claims to legitimacy, by both Constantine's sons and their rivals, were open to challenge. That in itself is a striking situation, since it points to an empire perpetually on edge, threatening to descend into civil war at almost any moment. That is a set of circumstances that demands analysis.¹² Discussion in this chapter will focus on episodes relating to and consequences arising from the civil war between Constantius and Magnentius in 350–353. First, it will examine how Magnentius' usurpation in 350 offered not only a military challenge to the unity of the empire, but also an ideological one, as various parties scrambled to assert legitimacy. The

⁸Threatened civil war: Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.5, with Maraval 2013: 51, for scepticism. For divergent western and eastern consulships in 344 and 346, see Bagnall et al. 1987: 222–223 and 226–227: the evidence suggests that in 346, Constans was rejecting irenic overtures from his brother, who had proclaimed a joint-consulship of the brothers (Constantius for the fourth time and Constans for the third). For the 340s in general, Maraval 2013: 50–58.

⁹Amm. Marc. 15.5; Hunt 1999.

¹⁰For Julian's revolt and the propaganda war associated with it, see Humphries 2012.

¹¹For the ideal of unity, and challenges to it, in the fourth century, see Inglebert 2015. On the theme of imperial unity, see the chapter by Christine Greenlee in this volume.

¹²For the prevalence of civil war in the fourth century more broadly, see Humphries 2017: 1092–1095.

responses to this ideological competition will be explored in the second section of the chapter, which will scrutinise how western aristocrats responded to the crisis. These various threads will be united in the third section of the chapter, which examines the reaffirmation of political and ideological unity after Constantius' victory over Magnentius at the battle of Mursa in 351. But this was not the end of the story: the final section of this chapter will consider why an interpretation of events that was favourable to Constantius did not, in the end, turn out to be the most influential one.

CLAIMS TO LEGITIMACY IN AN UNFOLDING CRISIS

Rival Emperors

On 18 January 350, a commander of the palatine legions in Gaul, Magnentius, was proclaimed emperor by a cabal of high officials who had revolted against Constans; within a short time, Constans was hunted down as he fled to Spain and killed.¹³ Having thus seized the throne through violence, Magnentius would need to start affirming his legitimacy, but would likely have to do so in a competitive environment. It was surely a reasonable expectation that Constans' remaining brother, Constantius, would prepare for war as soon as peace could be secured on the Persian front.¹⁴ Two later sources, Peter the Patrician (sixth century) and Zonaras (twelfth century), record that Constantius had a dream in which his father instructed him to avenge his brother's death; this detail could go back to Constantius' own propaganda, either during the civil war itself or later as a *post eventum* justification for it.¹⁵ Peter and Zonaras also hint that Magnentius himself anticipated such a challenge and, sometime later in 350, made overtures to Constantius in the hope of sharing power

¹³The most complete account is *Epit. de Caes.* 41.22–24. For Magnentius' background, see *PLRE* 1: 532 (Fl. Magnus Magnentius). Much of what we know about him is contested, not least because of polemical portraits of the usurper made in the aftermath of civil war: Drinkwater 2000.

¹⁴Cf. Drinkwater 2000: 133.

¹⁵Petr. Patr. fr. 16 Müller; Zonar. 13.7. Appealing to past generations was a common enough trope: for example, in his appeal for the restoration of the altar of Victory in 384, Symmachus called on Valentinian II to stay true to his father and right a wrong enacted (in error) by his brother: *Relat.* 3.20. Later, Ambrose has Gratian waiting in heaven to welcome his brother Valentinian II: *De obitu Valentiniani* 54, 71–74.

with him; such an appeal will have required the usurper to make a case for his legitimacy.¹⁶ But it soon became clear that Constantius was only part of Magnentius' problem, as new challenges appeared elsewhere in the West: troops on the Danube frontier reacted to the upheavals by elevating their own emperor, the *magister peditum* Vetranio, on 1 March; then, on 3 June, at Rome, a further rival emerged, Nepotianus, who would hold the city for four weeks until he was violently overthrown by Magnentius' forces.¹⁷ They too could be expected to set about affirming their positions as legitimate emperors.

It is here that we immediately encounter a problem: the narrative sources for the early 350s are so sketchy, and so influenced in their presentation of events by what quickly unfolded over the course of the next months and years, as to make a complete reconstruction of events, and the motivations behind them, virtually impossible. It is reasonable to assume that Constans had become unpopular in Gaul with at least some sections of the army and the high command: the rapidity with which forces there transferred their allegiance to Magnentius and the violence of Constans' death are enough to demonstrate that, and we can equally surmise that the seeds of what was evidently a carefully planned coup against him were already being sown in the last weeks of 349.¹⁸ Even so, the decision to activate the rebellion against Constans while the court was at winter quarters in Augustodunum (Autun), some distance from the main troop concentrations on the Rhine frontier, has been regarded as indicating some caution on the part of conspirators jittery about provoking the soldiery.¹⁹ After securing control in Gaul, Magnentius turned his attentions towards Italy, and perhaps by as early as February,²⁰ and therefore only a month or so after his elevation, was in charge of the important strategic city of Aquileia. The city commanded access to the Julian Alps and beyond them the Balkans, making it an ideal springboard for Magnentius' efforts to extend his control into Illyricum. It is presumably in this context that we should locate Ammianus' back-reference to the capture of the *comes* Acacius by Magnentius' forces, as a result of which the usurper was able to

¹⁶ As he seems to have done later in 350: Petr. Patr. fr. 16 Müller; Zonar. 13.7.

¹⁷ For a recent survey of events in 350, see Maraval 2013: 81–101; Moser 2018: 173–180; see also Drinkwater 2000 and Dearn 2003: 169–176; there is still much of value in Šašel 1971, who is more inclined than Drinkwater to accept Vetranio as a “loyalist” usurper.

¹⁸ For the failings and fall of Constans, see Harries 2012: 194–196.

¹⁹ Drinkwater 2000: 133–134.

²⁰ For this date, see Maraval 2013: 86.

stake a claim to the strategic passes (*claustra*) through the Julian Alps.²¹ On 27 February, moreover, one of Magnentius' partisans, Fabius Titianus, had been elevated to urban prefecture at Rome, which similarly attests to the usurper extending his control over Italy.²² Presumably around the same time, another of Magnentius' loyalists, Anicetus, was made Praetorian Prefect of Italy; he was later killed in the upheavals that attended Nepotianus' seizure of Rome.²³ In the event, the descent into Italy seems to have been counterproductive. The chronology of Vetrano's proclamation on 1 March at Sirmium (where the main road from Italy and the Julian Alps reached the Danube) suggests that it may have been Magnentius' efforts to extend his control over Illyricum that provoked the Danubian troops into raising their new emperor.

While we have relatively detailed information on Magnentius' proclamation, the situation is much sketchier for Vetrano and Nepotianus. The latter's reign was exceedingly brief, lasting only four weeks (3–30 June 350), and notices in the sources are terse.²⁴ As for Vetrano, it seems that the history of his ten-month reign was rewritten to cohere with its outcome: his abdication before Constantius II at Naissus on 25 December 350, an event that loomed large in pro-Constantinian depictions of the crisis since it could be presented as a striking example of Constantius' capacity for clemency.²⁵ It therefore became expedient to present Vetrano as a sort of "loyalist" usurper, holding the Danube for the ruling dynasty until Constantius could take charge in person. That Constantius' sister, Constantina (who would go on to play an important role in his dynastic plans, when she married the Caesar Gallus),²⁶ was somehow involved behind the scenes only complicates matters, since it is not abundantly clear when she became involved and in precisely what capacity. Nevertheless, her presence in the narrative clearly helped promote the idea that Vetrano was a Constantinian loyalist opposed to Magnentius.²⁷ At some point, if the account of Philostorgius is to be accepted, Vetrano may have accepted

²¹ Amm. Marc. 31.11.3, with Šašel 1971: 3. The action is also alluded to in Julian., *Or.* 1.35c–d.

²² Date in the *Chron.* 354, list of prefects: *Chron. min.* 1.69; cf. Chastagnol 1962: 109–111.

²³ *PLRE* 1: 66–67 (Anicetus 1).

²⁴ *PLRE* 1: 624 (Nepotianus 2).

²⁵ Careful analysis in Dearn 2003: 171–176.

²⁶ *PLRE* 1: 222 (Constantina 2). For further discussion of the role of Constantina, see the chapters by John Vanderspoel and Shaun Tougher in this volume.

²⁷ Dearn 2003: 172–173.

the position of Caesar to Constantius as Augustus, and it has been suggested that this reflects Constantina's role.²⁸ In any case, it is clear enough that during the middle months of 350, a triangular network of negotiations was on-going between Constantius, Magnentius, and Vetranio, as the three rival emperors jostled for position.²⁹ In the end, the alliances Magnentius hoped for came to nothing. All the same, we see that either in response to this failure or perhaps at an earlier juncture in 350, Magnentius was playing the game of imperial legitimacy in other ways when he elevated a male relative Decentius to the position of Caesar³⁰; it may have been partially in response to this exercise in dynasty-building that Constantius elevated his own cousin Gallus—one of the few survivors of the massacre of 337—as Caesar at Sirmium on 15 March 351.³¹

Affirming Legitimacy

The implication of this complex sequence of events is clear: as the crisis unfolded, legitimacy was there to be claimed. Such assertions will have involved various mundane administrative tasks, such as the appointment of officials, the dispensing of law, and the payment of troops, all undertaken on the assumption that the claimant to the throne was acting as a legitimate emperor. The most obvious residues of such activity for us to consider, and the ones most likely to reflect the rival emperors' ideological claims, are coins, which Magnentius, Vetranio, and Nepotianus issued to proclaim their emperorship.

In terms of the coinage issued by the usurpers of 350, we can tentatively identify some strategies in terms of what these imperial claimants

²⁸ Philostorgius 3.22; accepted by Drinkwater 2000: 151.

²⁹ Šašel 1971: 5 helpfully tabulates the negotiations.

³⁰ The chronology is uncertain, but most scholars see Decentius as being elevated in the late summer of 350 (e.g. Kienast 1996: 320), presumably after his overtures to Constantius had been rejected. Zonar. 13.8.2 places Decentius' elevation at Milan in the aftermath of his narrative of Vetranio's abdication (13.7), but that cannot be taken as exact. Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 42.9), a contemporary, mentions that Decentius had already been appointed to oversee affairs in Gaul by the time of the recapture of Rome from Nepotianus—but mistakenly makes this coincide with Constantius' elevation of Gallus as Caesar (*Sed iam antea cum externi motus suspectarentur, Magnentius fratri Decentio Gallias, Constantius Gallo, cuius nomen suo mutaverat, Orientem Caesaribus commiserant*), an event securely attested by other sources on 15 March 351 (see next note). But such uncertainty is typical of what we know about Decentius: cf. Bleckmann 1999a.

³¹ For the date of Gallus' elevation, see the sources collected in Barnes 1993: 226.

sought to achieve. By the time of their revolt, the Christian empire of Constantine and his sons had held sway for some forty years, and a repertoire of symbols for use on the coinage was beginning to develop. In the context of 350, this was reflected in coins bearing the chi-rho monogram, which had been used on the emperor's standards since Constantine's time.³² Vetranio issued coins from Siscia showing him on the reverse holding two such standards or a figure of Victory holding one.³³ Some of his coins also bore the legend HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS, the Latin version of the Greek words *toutō nika* ("by this conquer"), a slogan firmly associated with Constantine I's Christian victories.³⁴ Vetranio was not alone in deploying Constantinian symbols. Later in his reign, Magnentius issued a striking series dominated by a large chi-rho on the reverse (I will return to this coinage and its context below). A similar type was issued, this time in Constantius II's name, when a certain Poemenius seized Trier in opposition to Magnentius as the usurper's regime was crumbling in summer 353.³⁵ The use of a device strongly associated with emperors of the Constantinian dynasty presents us with a situation in which the usurpers were deploying symbols of power that had become, in a sense, seals of legitimacy.

Moreover, we can see appeals to Constantinian legitimacy in other aspects of the three regimes that emerged in 350. As we have seen, Vetranio was presented, at least in retrospect, as a "loyalist" rebel, associated with Constantius' sister Constantina, and therefore intended to secure the loyalties of the Danubian armies until Constantius II arrived in person. Constantina was not, however, the only Constantinian woman working behind the scenes in 350. The Roman revolt of Nepotianus provides another possible example. His mother was Eutropia, a daughter of Constantius I and his second wife Theodora, and so one of Constantine I's half-sisters.³⁶ Clearly, connections with the dynasty mattered. Even Magnentius, and in spite of his toppling of Constans, surely understood

³² Barnes 2011: 74–80.

³³ *RIC* 8, Siscia 260, 270–271 (etc.), 293–294.

³⁴ For the Constantinian background: Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 1.28; for Vetranio's use of the device: Dearn 2003: 186–189.

³⁵ Holt 2005.

³⁶ Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 42.6: *Nepotianus, materna stirpe Flavio propinquus*, Eutr. 10.11: *Nepotiano, Constantini sororis filio*; *Epit. de Caes.* 42.3: *Nepotianus, Eutropiae Constantini sororis filius, hortantibus perditis Augusti nomen rapit; eum octavo die vicesimoque Magnentius oppressit*. For further details, see *PLRE* 1: 316 (Eutropia 2).

the prestige of such an attachment, if his wife Justina, one of whose brothers was tellingly called Constantianus,³⁷ belonged to some branch of the imperial family.³⁸ That was perhaps not Magnentius' only attempt to intermarry with the Constantinian family: a later source reports that an embassy sent by Magnentius to negotiate with Constantius offered a division of powers founded on a marriage alliance, with Constantius marrying Magnentius' daughter, and Magnentius himself wedding no less a figure than Constantina, whom we have seen supporting Vetranio.³⁹

In their coin issues and personal attachments, then, the three usurpers of 350 advertised—or perhaps were compelled to do so under duress—strong affinities with the established ruling dynasty. Part of their affirmation of legitimacy was a claim to represent continuity in some shape or form with an imperial line that had dominated the western empire since the elevation of Constantius I as Caesar in 293 (never mind the putative dynastic claims to Claudius II Gothicus that had gained currency under Constantine). But such claims (and counterclaims) were only part of the game of thrones; much would depend on the responses of important constituencies of opinion in the West.

IDEOLOGY AND ITALY: SENATORS BETWEEN RIVAL EMPERORS

Magnentius' coinage during the period in which he controlled Italy, from the spring of 350 to the winter of 351–352, hints at efforts to present his regime in as positive a light as possible. A number of issues, minted at Trier, Aquileia, and Rome, bore the legend VICTORIA AVG(usti) LIB(ertas) ROMANOR(um), “the emperor's victory is the Romans' liberty”.⁴⁰ An impressive triple *solidus* gold medallion issued from Aquileia (and so from sometime between Magnentius' descent on Italy in spring 350 and his loss of this territory in the winter of 351–352) shows on the reverse an image of Magnentius on horseback, a nimbus around his head, and receiving the submission of a female figure; exactly who this figure is cannot be demonstrated with any certainty (she could, with her mural crown, represent Aquileia), but the message intended for the issue is clear enough from the reverse inscription, LIBERATOR REI PVBLICAE

³⁷ *PLRE* 1: 221 (Constantianus 1).

³⁸ *Amm. Marc.* 28.2.10: *Constantianus ... Cerialis et Iustinae germanus*. Cf. Woods 2004.

³⁹ *Petr. Patr.* fr. 16.

⁴⁰ Bastien 1964: 159, 192, 196, 201–204.

(“liberator of the state”).⁴¹ Maraval has speculated recently that these issues “presented the emperor’s victory as that which would restore to the Romans the liberty taken from them by Constans”, and it has been noted by Bastien that a number of Magnentius’ issues presented a portrait of him without the imperial diadem, as if to advertise an appeal to non-autocratic liberty.⁴² The intention is plausible, if impossible to prove with certainty; but can we gauge how such messages might have been received by Magnentius’ new subjects in Italy? Some of them, certainly, felt so little loyalty towards him as to support Nepotianus’ brief proclamation in the summer of 350. The sources on that event are sketchy, attributing Nepotianus’ elevation to the actions of a gang of gladiators: this presumably indicates some sort of armed backing.⁴³ Yet members of the elite were also apparently involved: Eutropius reports not only that the recapture of the city by Magnentius’ forces saw Nepotianus’ death and the gruesome parade of his head around the city (just as had happened to Maxentius after his defeat by Constantine in 312) but also that there was now a purge in which many nobles were killed.⁴⁴

This last detail hints at the involvement of Rome’s senatorial aristocracy in the events of the early 350s, and that provides an opportunity for further investigation: after all, the Senate provides the best opportunity to examine how the inhabitants of the West reacted to the political crisis for the simple reason that they are better attested in our sources than any other group. In part that reflects their prominence in high official positions, which means that they are likely to be mentioned in passing by narrative accounts or legislation. But there are other sources too. The *Chronography of 354* contains a list of Rome’s urban prefects from 254 to 354, often giving us details of their date of appointment; unlike other documents in the *Chronography*, such as its consular *fasti*, it has not been

⁴¹ Bastien 1964: 49, 192, 196.

⁴² Maraval 2013: 87.

⁴³ Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 42.6: *armataque gladiatorum manu imperator fit*; Eutr. 10.11: *per gladiatoriam manum imperium vindicante, qui saevis exordiis dignum exitium nactus est.*

⁴⁴ Eutr. 10.11: *Vicesimo enim atque octavo die a Magnentianis ducibus oppressus poenas dedit. Caput eius pilo per urbem circumlatum est, gravissimaeque proscriptiones et nobilium caedes fuerunt.* Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 42.6–8, offers a lurid account of brutal murders under Nepotianus and during Magnentius’ capture of the city; but he muddles details, for example by misidentifying the Praetorian Prefect of Italy Anicetus (*PLRE* 1: 66–67 (Anicetus 2)), who was killed in fighting at Rome with Nepotianus’ partisans (Zos. 2.43.3), as Prefect of Rome.

redacted to excise appointments made during Magnentius' brief ascendancy, meaning it provides useful information, however terse, on administrative arrangements in the city and the role within it of particular senators.⁴⁵ Further light can be shed by examining the often extensive epigraphic records left by some of the individuals mentioned in the narrative sources and list of prefects. Taken together, they allow us to reconstruct something of the divided political loyalties provoked at Rome by Magnentius' rebellion.

The Usurper's Men

From the narrative accounts of the usurpation, a number of individuals emerge as key players in Magnentius' regime. Marcellinus, who had been *comes rei privatae* under Constans, is mentioned as a key player in the elevation of Magnentius at Augustodunum, during the retaking of Rome from Nepotianus and at the battle of Mursa in 351.⁴⁶ Beyond that, alas, nothing further is known about him. The same is true also of key figures like Nunechius, Magnentius' Praetorian Prefect in Gaul, Anicetus, who held the same office in Italy until his death in the revolt of Nepotianus, and of the more shadowy figures such as Chrestius, who was one of Marcellinus' co-conspirators in Gaul, Gaiso, who hunted down and killed Constans, and Heraclides, who Jerome tells us was a pro-Magnentian senator at Rome.⁴⁷ We are on much surer ground, however, when we turn to various of the prefects of Rome during the years 350–352. Not all are equally well attested, of course: Celius Probatas (in office 12 May–7 June 351) and Septimius Mnaesa (in office 9–26 September 352) are known only from the notices of their prefectures in the *Chronography of 354*.⁴⁸ But the other figures are altogether attested by extensive dossiers of documents, and for them some conclusions may be ventured.

Three of Magnentius' prefects had held the office before. The first Magnentian prefect, Fabius Titianus (in office 27 February 350–1 March 351), had been prefect under Constans (25 October 339–25 February 341). His successor on both occasions was Aurelius Celsinus (prefect for the first time 25 February 341–1 April 342; for the second time 1

⁴⁵ List of prefects: *Chron. min.* 1.62–69.

⁴⁶ *PLRE* 1: 546 (Marcellinus 8).

⁴⁷ *PLRE* 1: 202 (Chrestius); 380 (Gaiso); 418 (Heraclides); 635 (Nunechius).

⁴⁸ Chastagnol 1962: 131, 134.

March–12 May 351). This parallel succession suggests a clique of senators willing to pin their colours to the usurper's mast and acknowledge him as legitimate emperor. The third individual to have served a second term as prefect under Magnentius, L. Aradius Valerius Proculus Populonium (in office 18 December 351–9 September 352) had previously held the prefecture from 10 March 337 until 13 January 338, after a distinguished career that had seen him holding various governorships and honoured with various titles; but, as Chastagnol noted, his career entered a trough for the rest of Constans' reign (save for a post-consulship in 340), so his sudden reappearance on the political stage after a hiatus of over a decade could indicate either deliberate partisanship with the usurper on the part of the senator—or he may simply have been regarded as a safe pair of hands by the usurper's ministers after his immediate predecessor, Clodius Celsinus (see below), came under suspicion of plotting against Magnentius.⁴⁹

Of these individuals, Fabius Titianus repays particular scrutiny as he was evidently one of Magnentius' most distinguished servants.⁵⁰ Starting his public career as proconsul of Asia sometime late in Constantine's reign, he was then western consul in 337. Titianus went on to hold high office, first under Constans, to whom he served as Urban Prefect at Rome and then as a praetorian prefect in Gaul, and subsequently under Magnentius, under whom he enjoyed a second urban prefecture. The sequence of his offices makes it clear that he was a remarkable political opportunist. He is last attested as Constans' prefect in Gaul in a law of 12 November 349 (*Cod. Theod.* 9.24.2), just over a month before the usurpation. He perhaps belonged, therefore, to that coterie of high officials (along with Chrestius and Marcellinus) who conspired at Magnentius' usurpation, although no source specifies this. He was then appointed Urban Prefect for Rome on 27 February 350, presumably at the time Magnentius was establishing himself in northern Italy. He was likely involved, therefore, in the bloody repression of Nepotianus' regime at Rome at the end of June 350 and he remained in office until 1 March 351. That he was a key player in Magnentius' regime is an impression underscored by his role in late summer 351 as Magnentius' ambassador to Constantius before the battle of

⁴⁹ Chastagnol 1962: 101. For Magnentius and the senate, see Moser 2018: 278–279.

⁵⁰ For his career, see Chastagnol 1962: 107–111; *PLRE* 1: 918–919 (Titianus 6).

Mursa, during which embassy, we are told, he was exceedingly forthright in his critique of the Constantinian dynasty.⁵¹

Inscriptions from Rome allow us to reconstruct something of his activities there. A statue base from the Oppian hill, near the baths of Titus, attests this in two ways. It originally bore an inscription in honour of Constans, but that was erased, presumably as an act of *damnatio* after the coup of 350. It was then rededicated, however, between late June 350 and the beginning of March 351 with an inscription of Fabius Titianus, which, on account of its position on top of the erased dedication to Constans, must date to Titianus' second prefecture. It may show, therefore, Titianus' actions, first in the erasure of Constans' name, and then in the rededication of the monument—but to whom is unknown. The further erasure of Titianus' name must post-date the loss of Italy by Magnentius.⁵² A number of inscriptions also show that during his second urban prefecture in 350–351, Titianus was actively promoting Magnentius as legitimate emperor, erecting monuments that accorded him the usual imperial titles.⁵³ After Magnentius' defeat, we hear nothing further of Titianus' public career—but it has been speculated that he lived on and is to be identified as the unnamed individual mentioned by Julian and Themistius who insulted Constantius but was later forgiven.⁵⁴

Another Magnentian prefect of Rome who calls for attention is Clodius Celsinus Adelphius, in office from 7 June to 18 December 351. He too had enjoyed a relatively successful career, including governorships in southern Italy and, perhaps, Africa.⁵⁵ During his prefecture Magnentius was defeated by Constantius at the battle of Mursa on 28 September, and so came the first signs of trouble for the usurper's regime. This could provide the context for an event noted obliquely by Ammianus, who claims that Adelphius was accused of conspiring against Magnentius by a certain Dorus, a former army doctor now serving as an overseer of the monuments in the city of Rome.⁵⁶ It is possible that Adelphius switched allegiances after news of Mursa became known and as Magnentius' grasp on

⁵¹ Zos. 2.49.1–2.

⁵² *CIL* 6.40783a; discussion at *LSA* 1551 (original dedication) and 1562 (rededication by Titianus).

⁵³ *CIL* 6.1166a and 1167.

⁵⁴ So *PLRE* 1: 919, with references. Moser 2018: 279.

⁵⁵ *PLRE* 1: 192–193, positing at Celsinus 6 (the Urban Prefect) and Celsinus 7 (a consul-ar of Numidia under Constans) are the same individual; cf. Chastagnol 1962: 131–134.

⁵⁶ *Amm. Marc.* 16.6.2.

Italy was beginning to falter.⁵⁷ Whether or not that speculation is justified, Adelphius' change of heart shows that some senators who sided with Magnentius could come to regret their decisions.

Constantinian Loyalists

While Adelphius only latterly turned against the usurper, other senators decided at an early stage to remain loyal to the Constantinian dynasty. Some of these can be identified with some certainty. A passage of Epiphanius' *Panarion* records a panel of eight individuals who were charged by Constantius with investigating Photinus of Sirmium in 351.⁵⁸ While some members of the panel were partisans of Constantius from the East, one emphatically was not. This was Nacratius Cerealis,⁵⁹ and his reasons for attaching himself to Constantius are easy enough to divine: his sister Galla had been married to Julius Constantius (one of the victims of 337), with whom she had a son Gallus, who was now on the cusp of being elevated as Constantius' Caesar. Already by the end of September 352, Cerealis was in place as Prefect of Rome (he remained in office until 8 December 353), and immediately set about undermining Magnentius' reputation and reaffirming the legitimacy of Constantius. He was responsible for erecting, between the senatorial curia and the arch of Septimius Severus in the Forum, an equestrian statue of Constantius: its plinth bore an inscription acclaiming the emperor as "destroyer of wretched tyranny".⁶⁰ So soon after the city's capitulation from Magnentius to Constantius,⁶¹ that was an unambiguous message.

Cerealis' successor as prefect, Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (prefect twice: 353–355 and 357–359), also displayed loyalty to Constantius during the civil war.⁶² A series of inscriptions, from the bases of bronze statues set up by various urban corporations at his *domus* in Rome, and dating from during (or after) his second prefecture, record him serving as an envoy from the Roman Senate and people (*legato...petitu senatus et p(opuli) R(omani)*) and as a commander in military expeditions (*expeditiones*

⁵⁷ Julian., *Or.* 1.38c, mentions Italian defections to Constantius' side after Mursa.

⁵⁸ Epiph., *Panarion* 71.1; date: Barnes 1993: 109–110.

⁵⁹ See Chastagnol 1962: 135–139; *PLRE* 1: 197–199 (Cerealis 2).

⁶⁰ *CIL* 6.1158: *extinctor pestiferæ tyrannidis*.

⁶¹ A number of epitaphs from Rome use the names of Magnentius' consuls for 352, Decentius and Paulus; most of the dated examples come from the spring (G. B. de Rossi, *ICVR* 1.112–114), with one (G. B. de Rossi, *ICVR* 1.88) perhaps as late as July. See further Bagnall et al. 1987: 238–239.

⁶² See Chastagnol 1962: 139–147; *PLRE* 1: 651–653 (Orfitus 3).

bellicas gubernans).⁶³ Precisely when these activities took place cannot be ascertained, there is no reason why they cannot have occurred at different times in his career. But the inscriptions state Orfitus served as envoy “during difficult times” (*difficillimis temporibus*), which could indicate that this activity at least was undertaken in the context of the struggle to wrest Italy from Magnentius’ control. In return, Orfitus had honours showered upon him: the inscriptions mention also that he was honoured with the rank of *comes primi ordinis* and that he served among the emperor’s advisers (*intra consistorium*).⁶⁴ Here, then, we have a senator who became one of Constantius’ staunchest adherents. It was quite fitting, therefore, that his second urban prefecture should have witnessed Constantius’ visit to Rome between 28 April and 29 May 357.

The behaviour of those senators whose careers we can follow in detail attests to a range of responses to political crisis. On the one hand, we have political opportunists like Fabius Titianus, who declared for the usurper early on, but managed to be forgiven after the war (even if he was never again to hold high office). Others vacillated, like Clodius Celsinus Adelphius, first siding with Magnentius, but then turning against him. Finally, there is a third group: loyalists like Cerealis and Orfitus, whose devotion to Constantius was repaid with prefectures of the city when Italy was reconquered from Magnentius. As a body, the senators seem to have learned the lessons of the early 350s. When Julian made a bid for their support when he rose against Constantius in 361, their response was uncompromising, as they sternly warned the Caesar to reverence the Augustus as his creator and desist from his reckless action.⁶⁵

REAFFIRMING CONTESTED LEGITIMACY: CELEBRATING THE BATTLE OF MURSA

Magnentius’ hold over Italy was eventually undermined at the battle of Mursa on 28 September 351.⁶⁶ His defeat saw him endeavour to hold the passes in the Julian Alps and Aquileia, but, when that failed, he attempted

⁶³ *CIL* 6.1739–1742, set up by guilds of bakers (*pistores*), ship-owners (*navicularii*), contractors from Ostia and Portus (*susceptores Ostienses sive Portuenses*), and contractors (*corpus omnium mancipum*). See further *LSA* 1441–1444 for commentary on their location.

⁶⁴ On the rank of *comes primi ordinis*, see Jones 1964: 333, 528.

⁶⁵ *Amm. Marc.* 21.10.7.

⁶⁶ Major accounts preserved in Julian., *Or.* 1.36a–37b, 48b and *Or.* 2.57b–60d, together with *Zos.* 2.45.3–52.2 and *Zonar.* 13.8. Other brief narratives can be found in *Eutr.* 10.12;

a rear-guard action in the Po valley, while, concurrently, Constantius sent naval expeditions to take control of Africa and Sicily.⁶⁷ Italy, and with it Rome, now came over to Constantius' side. The famous portrait of him in the *Chronography of 354* is a vivid display of his reaffirmed authority over the city, and the list of consuls in the same document (although not its list of urban prefects) was redacted to echo the changing political context by replacing the names of Magnentius' appointees to the consulship in the years 351–353 with those appointed by Constantius.⁶⁸ By mid-352, Magnentius was compelled to retreat to Gaul, where he would hold out until he was finally defeated by Constantius at the battle of Mons Seleucus in the Cottian Alps, on the route across the mountains from Turin via Susa to Lugdunum in Gaul, in summer 353. By this stage, parts of Gaul were in open revolt against him, with Trier now held for Constantius by Poemenius. Shortly afterwards, Magnentius committed suicide at Lugdunum on 10 August; a week later, his Caesar Decentius hanged himself at Sens.⁶⁹

Of these engagements, the confrontation at Mursa came to loom large in Constantius' presentation of his victory, as an auspicious start to his retaking of the West and his reaffirmation of legitimacy. It had been a large-scale confrontation, involving considerable numbers of troops on both sides.⁷⁰ Casualties too seem to have been high: if the figures offered by Zonaras are accepted (and I suppose they probably should not), then this was one of the bloodiest engagements in Roman history, where some 30,000 (out of 80,000) fell on Constantius' side and 24,000 (out of 30,000) from Magnentius' army.⁷¹ Indeed, the very fact that the battle is known in such detail, from a variety of contemporary sources and later summaries, is indicative of its iconic status, and surely derives from the way in which the Mursa campaign was commemorated and celebrated already

Epit. de Caes. 42.4; John of Antioch, fr. 174 Müller. Modern accounts: Šašel 1971: 210–215; Elton 1996: 231–233; Humphries 2017: 1097–1099.

⁶⁷ Po valley: Humphries 2017: 1099; Africa and Sicily: Julian., *Or.* 2.74c.

⁶⁸ Salzman 1990: 38.

⁶⁹ *Epit. de Caes.* 42.6; Julian., *Orr.* 1.40a and 2.74c; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.32; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.6–7; Amm. Marc. 15.6.4 mentions Poemenius.

⁷⁰ Eutr. 10.12: *Ingentes Romani imperii vires ea dimicatione consumptae sunt*. Cf. *Epit. de Caes.* 42.4: *In quo bello paene nusquam amplius Romanae consumptae sunt vires totiusque imperii fortuna pessumdata*.

⁷¹ Zonar. 13.8.

in its immediate aftermath. For this there is abundant evidence from panegyrics, epigraphy, historical narratives, and a variety of other sources.

From the 350s itself, there are three extant panegyrics that give details of (or allude to) the confrontation. Among them are the first and second *Orations* written by Julian in the years after his elevation by Constantius to the rank of Caesar in 355. The speeches are, however, problematic as transparent sources, since it is debated to what extent they reflect diplomatic efforts on Julian's part to present himself as a loyal servant of his cousin. Recent studies have suggested that these speeches are in fact subversive, calculatedly undermining the senior emperor, and that they were, perhaps, never intended to be heard or read by Constantius.⁷² For my purposes here, however, this debate matters little, for if the *Orations* were satirical attacks on Julian's cousin, rather than genuine expressions of praise, they still needed to appeal to the ideological props of Constantius' propaganda if they were to subvert it. As such, they continue to reveal a great deal about the central place of civil war victory, and in particular the defeat of Magnentius at Mursa, in Constantius' expressions of his legitimacy.

Both speeches provide detailed accounts on which reconstructions of the clash have been ventured.⁷³ The opening words of the first speech makes clear the importance of the subject of civil war victory:

I have long desired, most mighty Emperor, to sing the praises of your valour and achievements, to recount your campaigns, and to tell how you suppressed the tyrannies; how your persuasive eloquence drew away one usurper's [i.e. Vetrano's] bodyguard; how you overcame another [Magnentius] by force of arms.⁷⁴

The characterisation of Constantius in the speeches stresses his martial prowess and capacity for clemency. If, in these passages, Julian is satirising the ways in which the Augustus wished to be represented, he still shows that Constantius' conduct in the Mursa campaign was central to how the Augustus wanted to be seen. A brief reference to the conflict in the third *Oration* of Themistius, delivered at Rome in 357, while it is mainly concerned with issues such as the relationship between Rome and

⁷² See Tougher 2012b on *Or.* 1; and Curta 1995 and Drake 2012 on *Or.* 2.

⁷³ Julian., *Or.* 1.36a–37b, 48b and *Or.* 2.57b–60d.

⁷⁴ Julian., *Or.* 1.1d, trans. Wright.

Constantinople, alludes to Constantius' victory, which is presented as liberating Rome from the tyrant's bloody regime.⁷⁵

In addition to the extant speeches of Julian and Themistius, we have evidence for a fourth panegyric account likely produced in the 350s, although the text itself is lost. In his account of his Italian travels in 1697, Bernard de Montfaucon recorded a tenth-century manuscript (now also lost) that he inspected in a library between Modena and Mantua. He mentions that it contained various works by the poetess Proba, including a work dealing with the war between Constantius (in a typical slip called "Constantine") and Magnentius.⁷⁶ The author is clearly, in spite of modern arguments to the contrary, the Roman senatorial lady Faltonia Betitia Proba, celebrated author of a Virgilian *cento* on the biblical Creation story.⁷⁷ Her reason for writing a panegyric account are easily deduced, for her husband was none other than Clodius Celsinus Adelphius, the one-time Prefect of Rome, who had started out as a Magnentian loyalist, but had later plotted against the usurper (see above). His wife's work on the Mursa campaign completes the family's efforts at rehabilitation, by presenting a positive account of Constantius' signal victory.⁷⁸

A further, fifth panegyric has been detected as lying behind the extraordinarily detailed account of the Mursa campaign found in the early sixth-century history of Zosimus. His account of the period 337–353 is remarkably uneven: it comprises fifteen chapters, eleven of which deal with the Mursa campaign in 351 and which are full of dramatic incident.⁷⁹ Olivetti and Bleckmann are surely right to see this detail as deriving from a panegyric account, either directly available to Zosimus or mediated through his source Eunapius of Sardis.⁸⁰ Similarly striking details—such as emphasis on the valour and honour of Constantius, contrasting with the

⁷⁵Them., *Or.* 3.43a–c. Heather and Moncur 2001: 129 n. 256, wrongly underestimate the impact of Magnentius' regime on Rome: Themistius' reference to senatorial purges is consonant with Eutropius' notice (10.11) of proscriptions in the city after Nepotianus was overthrown. See also Them., *Or.* 2.33d–34a on Magnentius' illegitimacy.

⁷⁶Montfaucon 1702: 36.

⁷⁷For a review of the debates, citing the voluminous earlier bibliography, see Cameron 2011: 327–337.

⁷⁸Cf. the story of Q. Aurelius Symmachus who in 388 had delivered a panegyric praising the usurper Magnus Maximus, but then in the following year gave an ostentatious sign of his political rehabilitation by delivering one in honour of Theodosius I: Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 5.14.

⁷⁹Zos. 2.45.3–52.2.

⁸⁰Olivetti 1915; Bleckmann 1999b. Olivetti's suggestion that the source was Proba's panegyric seems implausible: Paschoud 2000: xlvi–xlix.

perfidious behaviour of the defeated Magnentius—are also found in John of Antioch and Zonaras and could also derive from a panegyrical account, perhaps identical with that underpinning the stories found in Zosimus.⁸¹

We have, therefore, evidence from three extant speeches (two of them perhaps satirical) and at least two lost panegyrical accounts that attest to importance of Constantius' defeat of Magnentius, and particularly the victory at Mursa, as central to imperial propaganda in the aftermath of the civil war. Other reactions are recorded and they too imply that special importance was attached to the victory. There exist accounts recording the enthusiastic responses to news of Magnentius' defeat from Christian bishops keen to gain Constantius' support. A letter to the emperor from Cyril of Jerusalem claims that the victory was portended to him by a flaming cross seen in the sky over the Mount of Olives. A notice in Sulpicius Severus alleges that the bishop of Mursa, Valens, who was to become one of Constantius' staunchest allies in his ecclesiastical policy in the West, congratulated Constantius soon after the victory, claiming that he had received word of it from an angel.⁸² These assertions that the battle's outcome was sanctioned by God are wholly consonant with the Constantinian empire's developing ideology of Christian victory.⁸³

But the most striking evidence for the importance of the civil war victory in the affirmation of imperial legitimacy comes from the traces of Constantius' own efforts to commemorate it. Ammianus reports in his obituary notice on Constantius that the emperor erected triumphal arches in Gaul and Pannonia,⁸⁴ which likely refers to monuments celebrating the victories at, respectively, Mons Seleucus and Mursa. Ammianus also indicates that the victory was marked by imperial ceremonial. At Arles in the winter after the war, Constantius hosted spectacular entertainments in the circus and theatre.⁸⁵ The climax of such ceremonial celebration came with Constantius' visit to Rome in April–May 357, the subject of one of Ammianus' most vivid *ekphrases*.⁸⁶ The emperor's procession through the city was impressive: he was accompanied by troops and cavalry in glittering

⁸¹ Zonar. 13.8; John of Antioch, fr. 174 Müller.

⁸² Cyril, *Ep. Const.* 2, 3, 5; Sulp. Sev., *Chron.* 2.38. Discussion in Humphries 1997: 452–454.

⁸³ McCormick 1986: 100–106.

⁸⁴ Amm. Marc. 21.16.15.

⁸⁵ Amm. Marc. 14.5.1.

⁸⁶ Amm. Marc. 16.10; see now Moser 2018: 287–311; I discuss the visit and Ammianus' account of it in Humphries 2019.

armour. While visiting, he hosted circus games. The visit had been pre-saged by monuments that explicitly lauded Constantius' defeat of Magnentius, notably an equestrian statue set up in front of the arch of Septimius Severus by the Urban Prefect Naeratius Cerealis (see above). But the jewel in the monumental crown was the obelisk that Constantius ordered to be set up in the Circus Maximus (it now stands outside the Lateran). This was the largest ever obelisk to be erected at Rome and it was supported by a plinth that bore inscriptions that make clear it was erected as a monument to celebrate the victory in the civil war with Magnentius.⁸⁷

It is not difficult to see why the victory should have been so important to Constantius and so deserving of commemoration. Where his brothers had failed, Constantius had now succeeded—what is more, like his father before him, he had become Augustus of the whole empire. And like his father, he embarked on a programme aimed at achieving unity throughout the empire, not least in terms of the faith professed by its churches. That there were definite Constantinian echoes in what Constantius was seeking to achieve can be seen from his own propaganda in these years. Coins issued after the victory were emblazoned with images of the emperor carrying the Christian standard, the *labarum*, being crowned by victory, and accompanied by the inscription *hoc signo victor eris*—the formula that had accompanied Constantine's fateful vision before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.⁸⁸ It may be no coincidence that Magnentius' chi-rho coinage was issued only after the loss of Italy, when competition for this legitimising trope was pronounced.⁸⁹ In any case, the symbols of the Constantinian empire now accrued to Constantius alone. It was a circumstance that his theological enemies soon capitalised on as, in the last years of the reign, they sought to demonstrate precisely how *unlike* his father Constantius actually was.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *CIL* 6. 1163; discussion in Henck 2001: 281–283. For the possibility that the basilica of St Peter on the Vatican is another monumental consequence of the visit, see Westall 2015. For further discussion of the obelisk and its Constantinian inscription, see the chapter by Eric R. Varner.

⁸⁸ Pietri 1989.

⁸⁹ Holt 2005.

⁹⁰ Humphries 1997; Flower 2016.

FORGETTING MURSA

In sum, Constantius' victory over Magnentius was not simply confirmation of his legitimacy; it could also have been regarded as a divine endorsement of his destiny to bring harmony to the empire. There is good reason, therefore, to support Norman Baynes' affirmation, a century ago, that "No student of the history of the fourth century can indeed afford to neglect the battle of Mursa".⁹¹ And yet, in conventional narratives of the fourth century, it is overshadowed by other civil war confrontations such as Constantine's victories at the Milvian Bridge (312) and Chrysopolis (324), or Theodosius I's at the River Frigidus (394).⁹² For that fact we have the usual suspect to thank: I would suggest that our diminished appreciation of this battle arises from two influences—one unintentional, but the other wholly deliberate—of the narrative of the historian Ammianus Marcellinus.

Let me deal first with the unintentional aspect, since it can be dispatched with briefly: namely, that there is *no* account of the battle in Ammianus' pages, by reason of the mutilated survival of Ammianus' text. His truncated narrative begins with Magnentius already dead and Constantius' already having won the war. But rather more than that is the second, and altogether more insidious, influence that Ammianus has exercised on how we view the event. It is too little appreciated by modern students of the fourth century that many of our assumptions about that period are extrapolated from what we learn from his account of a mere twenty-six years. In other words, reconstructions of fourth-century history tend to proceed from insights derived from Ammianus and fit other evidence into a matrix provided by his account.⁹³ A significant challenge to that consensus was offered by Timothy Barnes, who arrived at Ammianus having already immersed himself in fourth-century ecclesiastical authors, and was startled "to realize how much the Roman Empire of Ammianus differed from the mid-fourth-century world that [his] researches into the

⁹¹ Baynes 1911: 62.

⁹² For the contingency of such memories, see, in connection with 312, Van Dam 2011; for 394, see Cameron 2011: 93–131.

⁹³ The most obvious examples of this are Matthews 1989 and the essays collected in Drijvers and Hunt 1999. The very titles of these works imply that Ammianus is the chief guide to the fourth-century empire.

career of Athanasius were revealing to [him]—a discrepancy that clamoured for explanation”.⁹⁴

Precisely such a discrepancy can be seen in what Ammianus does say about the aftermath of the war with Magnentius, which is in every way at odds with how we have seen Constantius wished it to be seen. For example, he describes the immediate aftermath of the war as one in which the empire was exhausted, tossed about by the gusts of raging Fortune (14.1.1). Constantius’ aspirations to be a just emperor in imitation of the *civiles principes* of the past are ridiculed (15.1.3) and with it the emperor’s claims to represent legitimate government. The triumphal arches in Gaul and Pannonia merely record the ruin of those provinces and the gore from civil conflicts with which Constantius had drenched the state (*ex clade provinciarum*: 21.16.15).

Ammianus’ damning portrait reaches its crescendo with his celebrated account of Constantius’ visit to Rome in 357.⁹⁵ If that visit represented the ceremonial climax of Constantius’ affirmation of his legitimate rule, then precisely that image is subverted throughout Ammianus’ depiction of it. The emperor’s arrival in full military array is castigated as doubly inappropriate. First, this is behaviour more fitting for frontier wars. Secondly, Constantius has the temerity to celebrate not a victory over some foreign foe, but one won *ex sanguine Romano* (16.10.1)—indeed, Ammianus claims that Constantius could boast of no such appropriate victory, a remark that subverts the image of Constantius as *totius orbis victor* trumpeted in inscriptions on statue bases set up in prominent locations in the Forum Romanum by the Urban Prefect at the time of the visit, Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus.⁹⁶ This suggests that Ammianus is deliberately undercutting the image that Constantius had wished to broadcast. That sense is reinforced by his treatment of the Lateran obelisk. Its status as a victory monument is diminished twice, first by relegating discussion of its erection to a later chapter of his narrative, and thereby decoupling it from his account of the emperor’s visit; and secondly by providing there an account of it that concentrates on its hieroglyphic inscriptions, thereby pointedly ignoring the inscription on its base that referred to the defeat of Magnentius.

⁹⁴ Barnes 1998: vii.

⁹⁵ For the literary textures and narrative strategies of this account, see Humphries 2019, which discusses the points raised here in more detail.

⁹⁶ *CIL* 6.1161 (cf. 1162) and 31395; for discussion of their locations, see *LSA* 1278–1279, 1360.

Why is Ammianus' account so pointedly subversive? On the one hand, it surely reflects his partisan allegiance to Julian, the undoubted hero of his narrative, for whom Constantius acts as a villainous foil.⁹⁷ But in addition, it must reflect Ammianus' perspective on the duties of the imperial office. His last book finishes with the aftermath of the Gothic victory at Hadrianople in 378. That battle he equates with Hannibal's rout of the Romans at Cannae, not merely to emphasize its scale, but also to suggest that now, as in the second Punic war, a Roman recovery might be achieved.⁹⁸ But such a recovery might only be achieved if emperors devoted their attentions to waging war on foreign enemies, as Julian had done, and not if, like Constantius, they were more concerned with civil conflict. This criticism was not unique to Ammianus: writing a couple of decades earlier, the historian Eutropius—another admirer of Julian—had regretted the expending of such vast resources of manpower on the war with Magnentius when they might have been used more fruitfully in guaranteeing success on the frontiers.⁹⁹

But when Ammianus was writing his account at Rome around 390, this was a pointed insinuation. In 388 there had been another civil war between Theodosius I and the western usurper Magnus Maximus, and a year later Theodosius, like Constantius, set a seal on his victory by visiting Rome. It has been argued that Ammianus' account of 357 is a veiled attack on Theodosius' visit.¹⁰⁰ Whether or not we see in Constantius a reflection of Theodosius, it is demonstrably the case that Ammianus' vision of the emperor and his duties prioritised foreign over civil war. As such, his negative notices on Constantius' war with Magnentius suggest that he was deliberately undermining the ways in which memory of the battle of Mursa had been promoted through panegyric, ceremonial, and monuments in the 350s. Here, as elsewhere, Ammianus does not dispassionately report the reality of his fourth-century world, as readers since Gibbon have imagined; on the contrary, he misrepresents it in calculated and deceptive fashion.

⁹⁷ See now the extensive treatment in Ross 2016.

⁹⁸ Kelly 2007.

⁹⁹ Eutr. 10.12, *ad quaelibet bella externa idoneae, quae multum triumphorum possent securitatisque conferre.*

¹⁰⁰ McCormick 1986: 80–83.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has argued that civil war and threats of usurpation were centrally important features in the history of the Roman empire under the sons of Constantine—as indeed they were in the later Roman empire more generally.¹⁰¹ But gauging the importance of these events is difficult, not least because the narrative and polemical sources on which we rely tend to rewrite events in the light of later outcomes, whether that be the recasting Vetranio’s usurpation as a “loyalist rebellion” after his capitulation to Constantius in December 350 or the minimising of the significance of civil war generally in order to argue for the priorities of defence against foreign enemies, as argued by Ammianus. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, enough survives to show that there were throughout the period important contestations of legitimacy. For some of the subjects of these rival emperors and usurpers, this presented a challenge in terms of whom they should support—as the actions of several distinguished senators demonstrated, responses to this challenge were difficult. Ultimately, if the sons of Constantine may be said, in some sense, to have inherited the empire, this was an inheritance to which they had to stake a claim time and again in the face of opposing claims (sometimes from each other). Even the most successful of the sons, Constantius II, faced this challenge right to the bitter end of his reign when, as he lay dying at Mopsucrenae in Cilicia in November 361, he was facing an impending civil war with his cousin Julian. Once again, propaganda was marshalled to support rival claims to legitimacy.¹⁰²

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¹⁰¹ Szidat 2010.

¹⁰² Humphries 2012. I am grateful to Shaun Tougher and Nic Baker-Brian for their invitation to contribute, their patience, and their insight; profound thanks also go to Richard Flower, Adrastus Omissi, Alan Ross, and Rebecca Usherwood.

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CHAPTER 7

Eusebia and Eusebius: The Roles and Significance of Constantinian Imperial Women and Court Eunuchs

Shaun Tougher

INTRODUCTION

In his obituary on Constantius II, the longest living of the sons of Constantine and the one for whom the historian's (generally hostile) treatment survives at least in part (AD 354–361), Ammianus dwells on the role that certain figures at court had in the decision making of the emperor.¹ Beyond some unspecified court officials the historian notes that the emperor was “to an excessive degree under the influence of his wives, and the shrill-voiced eunuchs” (*Uxoribus et spadonum gracilentis vocibus*).² This accusation is, however, not unique to Ammianus. It is found some thirty years earlier in Eutropius' *Breviarium*, where it is remarked that

¹For Ammianus Marcellinus see, for instance, Matthews 1989; Barnes 1998; Kelly 2008; and now Ross 2016.

²Amm. Marc. 21.16.16, trans. Rolfe, vol. 2: 183.

S. Tougher (✉)
Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
e-mail: TougherSF@cardiff.ac.uk

Constantius was “too trusting of his friends and companions and subsequently, too, excessively influenced by his wives” (*nimum amicis et familiaribus credens, mox etiam uxoribus deditior*).³ While Eutropius does not spell out the eunuch dimension specifically, an even more significant and slightly earlier witness does. Giving his speech of thanks on 1 January 362 on the occasion of his becoming first consul for the year and inaugurating the new age of Julian, Claudius Mamertinus emphasised the less than pleasing regime of Julian’s predecessor and cousin Constantius II.⁴ On the subject of the appointment of officials Mamertinus (19.4) alleges that very few received office on merit but won them through securing the favour of “the most abandoned of the courtiers” (*Ceteri vero perditissimum quemque ex aulicis frequentabant*),⁵ cultivating those favoured by the emperor, which encompassed not just men but women (*mulierculas, feminas*) and eunuchs (*spadones*), who are “set apart from either sex, banished, as it were, from fellowship in the human race”.⁶ Of course, Mamertinus’ remarks on these vile favourites had particular resonance at the start of 362, for he himself had just served as one of the judges at the trials at Chalcedon initiated by Julian at the beginning of his sole reign and which witnessed a purge of key civil officials of the administration of Constantius, including amongst its victims the infamous figures of the eunuch Eusebius the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, the *agente in rebus* Apodemius, and the notary Paul “the Chain”.⁷ This depiction of the influence of particular court favourites is obviously both extremely pejorative and designed to reflect badly on the figure of Constantius II.

The case of the notary Paul “the Chain” makes an arresting and useful example for this trend in the depiction of the court of Constantius.⁸ The

³ Eutr. 10.15, trans. Bird 1993: 68.

⁴ For Claudius Mamertinus and his speech see, for instance, Blockley 1972; Lieu 1989: 3–38; Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 386–436, 629–646 (text); Garcia Ruiz 2006.

⁵ Trans. Marna M. Morgan in Lieu 1989: 29.

⁶ Trans. Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 421.

⁷ Amm. Marc. 22.3. For the trials at Chalcedon see, for instance, Bowersock 1978: 66–70. The other civilian officials condemned at the trials were Florentius, the former Praetorian Prefect of Gaul; Taurus, former Praetorian Prefect of Italy; Florentius, the Master of Offices; Palladius, the ex-Master of Offices; Evagrius *comes rei privatae*; Saturninus, former Steward of the Palace (*cura palatii*); Cyrinus, the ex-notary; and infamously Ursulus, the Count of the Sacred Largesses. Pentadius, a former notary and Master of Offices, was acquitted.

⁸ PLRE 1: 683–684 (Paulus “Catena” 4). Teitler 1985: 158–159 (PAULUS 3). In the service of the emperor he was involved in investigating and pursuing cases of treason, for example, in the aftermaths of the usurpations of Magnentius and Silvanus, the fall of Gallus,

concern of this chapter, however, is to consider the particular roles that eunuchs and women played within the reigns of Constantine II, Constans and Constantius II, and to examine this within the extended history of the Constantinian dynasty, exploring how this compares and contrasts with the roles eunuchs and women had performed previously.⁹ Did the sons follow precedents set by their father, or did they seek new paths and behave in different ways? More fundamentally, how historically significant are the roles of imperial women and eunuchs in the period 337–361? The chapter builds on my previous work on court eunuchs in the later Roman empire, on the figure of the empress Eusebia, the second wife of Constantius II, and on family relationships within the Constantinian dynasty.¹⁰ It marks a development in this work by bringing the subjects of women and eunuchs together and by focusing on the period 337–361 as a discrete entity.¹¹ As

and in Oriens in 359: *Amm. Marc.* 14.5.6–9, 15.6.1, 15.3.4, 19.12.1–17 (on usurpers and the sons of Constantine see the chapter by Mark Humphries in this volume). Ammianus depicts his activities and character in very dark and sinister hues: Paul was known as “the Chain” “because he was invincible in weaving coils of calumny, exerting himself in a wonderful variety of schemes, just as some expert wrestlers are in the habit of showing excessive skill in their contests”, as well as “Tartareus” (“Hellish”), “skilled in the work of bloodshed, and just as a trainer of gladiators seeks profit and emolument from the traffic in funerals and festivals, so did he from the rack or the executioner”: *Amm. Marc.* 15.3.4, 19.12.1, trans. Rolfe, vol. 1: 121, 535. The grim depiction of Paul in Ammianus reflects on the nature of Constantius and his regime too; the historian remarks, for instance, that “no one easily recalls the acquittal of anyone in the time of Constantius when an accusation against him had even been whispered”, and “it is not seemly for a prince to rejoice beyond measure in such sorrowful events, lest his subjects should seem to be ruled by despotism rather than by lawful power”: *Amm. Marc.* 14.5.8, 19.12.18, trans. Rolfe, vol. 1: 35, 543. Ammianus’ image of Paul has been so compelling that Pierre Renucci, for instance, asserts that Paul would have made an excellent SS *Obersturmführer* of the Gestapo: Renucci 2000: 387. Julian, Libanius and Philostorgius also comment negatively on the activities of Paul, but they are not disinterested voices and have a vested interest in disseminating and perpetuating negative images of the agents and regime of Constantius. Notaries, like eunuchs and women, were part of the imperial political landscape, and Paul’s activities were presumably in keeping with the expectation of the role; it is too easy to swallow the perspective of the Julianic camp and resort to the language of spies and SS officers. For notaries in the later Roman empire see, for example, Kelly 2004: 206–207; Teitler 1985; Vogler 1979: 192–197; Jones 1964, vol. 1: 572–575.

⁹There is no sustained treatment of imperial women and only brief treatment of court eunuchs in Maraval 2013: 187–188.

¹⁰See, for example, Tougher 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000, 2008: 36–53, 2012a, 2015.

¹¹Ammianus points the way of course, as has been seen, and as reflected by imperial women and eunuchs being treated together in Barnes 1998: 120–128, Chapter XI, “Empresses and Eunuchs”. On studying both eunuchs and women in relation to courts see also Dettenhofer 2009.

will be seen, it is the subject of imperial women—daughters of Constantine, but also various other female relatives—that forms the substantial part of the chapter, but the aspect of eunuchs does fulfil a vital role. Their case has been more fully studied, and hence is treated more briefly here, but it does inform how imperial women can be thought about. Recently Constantinian women (as well as Tetrarchic women) have begun to receive sustained attention too, for instance, in the work of François Chausson, Robert Frakes and Manuel J. Rodríguez Gervás, but most significantly in treatments by Liz James and Jill Harries.¹² James has contributed a chapter entitled “Ghosts in the Machine: The Lives and Deaths of Constantinian Imperial Women” to a volume on Byzantine gender published in 2013.¹³ Jill Harries devoted part of her history *Imperial Rome AD 284 to 363: The New Empire* (published in 2012) to “Images of Women”, and a chapter called “The Empresses’ Tale, AD 300–360” to a festschrift for Gillian Clark (published in 2014).¹⁴ The observations of James and Harries are in tune. They note the limitations of the ancient evidence, both literary and visual, for reconstructing the reality of the lives of these imperial women. What survives tends to be images and stories of women that men created for particular purposes and for men’s agendas: women serve as symbols and ciphers. Further, they argue for the limited public role imperial women played in this period, contrasting it with the actions of later famous Theodosian empresses such as Pulcheria and Galla Placidia.¹⁵ Harries does find the roots of an outlet for a public role for such elite women in Christian patronage, seen especially in the examples of Helena the mother of Constantine and Constantina his elder daughter, though she sees such behaviour as an unintended consequence of the policies of Constantine. In this chapter, however, I will question this rather pessimistic view of the role and power of Constantinian women compared to their later counterparts. I will suggest that Constantinian women deserve to be recognised for a more significant public role, a role that Constantine himself fostered. The women of the Constantinian dynasty should not just be seen as spare

¹² Chausson 2007; Frakes 2006; Rodríguez Gervás 2004. See also the comments on Constantinian women in the chapter by John Vanderspoel in this volume.

¹³ James 2013. See also her book on early Byzantine empresses: James 2001.

¹⁴ Harries 2012, 2014.

¹⁵ See also Sabbah 1992: 105. He notes that the imperial women in the age of Ammianus mark a period of transition, between the influential earlier Roman and later Byzantine imperial women, with only occasional cases of powerful empresses, but he also emphasises how Ammianus’ moralistic outlook has effaced women in his history.

parts and loose ends, but as integral to the success and functioning of the dynasty.¹⁶ Like the eunuchs of the period, with whom they have been grouped, they were a distinctive and important feature of the Constantinian court, and the stories and details recorded about them suggest that they were noticed and were considered to be politically significant. It will thus be argued that Theodosians such as Eutropius the eunuch and Pulcheria the empress, whose positions flourished in very specific circumstances, had clear forerunners in the Constantinian age.

EUNUCHS

Following Ammianus' lead this chapter treats eunuchs and women in relation to Constantius II specifically, before widening the focus in each case. The association of Constantius II and the power of court eunuchs are well recognised. The assertion that Ammianus makes about the influence of this group during the emperor's reign is reflected in his extant narrative too, unlike his comment about wives, which makes that assertion more puzzling and thus more interesting. Ammianus conjures up an image of individual court eunuchs, as well as court eunuchs as a group, having a particular part to play in actions taken in the reign and decisions of the emperor. The dominating figure is of course Eusebius, Grand Chamberlain (*praepositus sacri cubiculi*) of Constantius.¹⁷ The eunuch is presented as the controller of Constantius, the real power at the heart of the empire. Ammianus seems to joke that the emperor had some influence with the eunuch, thus turning the expected relationship on its head, and other courtiers are depicted as recognising the influence of Eusebius and the value of winning his favour (18.4.3). Eusebius is shown questioning the Caesar Gallus after his recall from Antioch and before his execution (14.11.20–21), and advocating the summoning to Milan of the Master of Cavalry in the East Ursicinus (14.11.1–3), a figure whom it is said he held personal enmity towards (18.4.3–4). Regarding the wider group of eunuchs at court, it is alleged that Eusebius used the chamberlains to poison Constantius' mind against Ursicinus (18.4.4), and the court eunuchs were able to use their agency to ensure that Gorgonius the chamberlain of Gallus was not punished after the fall of his master (15.2.10). Ammianus

¹⁶ See also Rodríguez Gervás 2004, who considers the cases of Helena, Fausta and Eusebia in particular.

¹⁷ *PLRE* 1: 302–303 (Eusebius 11).

clearly uses such stories about Eusebius and the court eunuchs to denigrate the character and regime of Constantius II. He is not alone in doing this, however. As has been seen, Mamertinus also makes the same point, as do a wide range of other authors, including Julian himself.¹⁸ In his *Letter to the Athenians*, Julian blames Eusebius for his bad relations with Constantius, asserting that the eunuch kept them apart, and he blames him for the fate of Gallus too.¹⁹ In his *Misopogon* Julian also comments on the status that eunuchs had achieved under Constantius II. Reporting that his tutor Mardonius was a eunuch Julian observes that this was “a word which, twenty months ago, was constantly heard and revered, though it is now applied as an insult and a term of abuse”.²⁰ Both Libanius (*Or.* 18.152) and Philostorgius (4.1) echo Julian on the role of Eusebius in the death of Gallus. Athanasius is more individual as he identifies the important role Eusebius and eunuchs played in the reign but then harnesses this fact to make a point about the theological disputes of the period; he observes that since eunuchs could not have sons they were in sympathy with the “Arian” position, being unable to bear even hearing the name of son (*History of the Arians* 35–38).²¹ It is a telling fact that such was Eusebius’ perceived significance some sources confuse Eusebius of Nicomedia the “Arian” bishop, himself presented as being very influential with Constantine I and Constantius II (not to mention Licinius and his wife Constantia), with the eunuch.²²

So, this brief consideration of court eunuchs under Constantius II has demonstrated that, just as James and Harries remarked in relation to the case of imperial women, stories were told about them by men with particular agendas, stories which do not necessarily reveal anything about the reality of the lives lived by such eunuchs. However, this does not mean that court eunuchs did not have significant roles to play, and were not important. From other evidence and as is clear from ongoing historical study, there is a much wider picture beyond the story of powerful and malign court eunuchs in the reign of Constantius II. Ever since the groundbreaking work of Keith Hopkins on the phenomenon of court

¹⁸ See, for example, Tougher 2008: 37, 79.

¹⁹ Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 274a–b, 272d.

²⁰ Julian., *Mis.* 352a–b, trans. Wright, vol. 2: 461.

²¹ On the association of court eunuchs and imperial women with “Arianism” see also Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.2.

²² See, for example, Hunt 1989: 87 n. 6. On Eusebius of Nicomedia see also, for instance, Gwynn 1999.

eunuchs in the later Roman empire it has been understood that the function that eunuchs played was an expression of the changing nature of Roman society and the imperial office in this period.²³ It is clear that eunuchs became an institutional feature at the imperial court from at least the reign of Diocletian. This is well reflected by Lactantius, whose *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* notes the significance of the role of court eunuchs in the period when describing how they were caught up in the persecution of Christians: he remarks that the eunuchs were executed although “Diocletian himself and the whole palace had depended” on them, and they “had once enjoyed great power”.²⁴ His casual mention of a eunuch at court, in the story of how a eunuch took the place of Constantine in his bed to expose a murder plot by Maximian, is telling too (30.1–5). This institutionalisation of eunuchs at the imperial court may indeed have been an evolving process rather than due to the sudden catalyst of the capture of the Persian harem by the Caesar Galerius in 298, as Hopkins suggested, but the fact remains that eunuchs did become part of the reality of late Roman society and the imperial system.²⁵ It just so happens that the case of the Grand Chamberlain Eusebius is the first clear example of a politically significant court eunuch, a precursor of the famous Theodosian Grand Chamberlain Eutropius, but it is evident that this was part of a general trend.²⁶ The Caesars of Constantius, Gallus and Julian, both had Grand Chamberlains in their service: Gallus had Gorgonius, and Julian had the celebrated Eutherius, the one eunuch whom Ammianus was able to praise.²⁷ The case of Eutherius is a very revealing one; recording his early history Ammianus remarks that the eunuch was

born in Armenia of free parents, but when still very young he was kidnapped by hostile tribemen in that neighbourhood, who gelded him and sold him to some Roman traders, who brought him to Constantine’s palace (*ad palatium Constantini*). There, as he grew up, he gradually gave evidence of virtuous living and intelligence... And if the emperor Constans had listened

²³ Hopkins 1963, 1978. See also, for example, Guyot 1980: 130–176; Patterson 1982: 299–333; Schlinkert 1994; Scholten 1995; Tougher 2008: 36–53.

²⁴ Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 15.2, trans. Creed 1984: 23.

²⁵ Hopkins 1963: 77–78; 1978: 192–193. For evolution see, for instance, Stevenson 1995; Tougher 2008: 42–53.

²⁶ For Eutropius see, for instance, Dunlap 1924: 272–284.

²⁷ *PLRE* 1: 399 (Gorgonius 3), 314–315 (Eutherius 1). *Amm. Marc.* 16.7.4. On Eutherius see also Woods 1998.

to him in times past, when Eutherius had grown up and was already mature, and urged honourable and upright conduct upon him, he would have been guilty of no faults, or at least only pardonable ones.²⁸

Thus not only had Constantius' brother Constans been served by Eutherius but the eunuch had begun his career under their father Constantine himself (perhaps after 324, when Constantine moved to the East). It sounds as if Constantine oversaw a court system that utilised eunuchs consistently in this way, but presumably he was following Tetrarchic precedents as indicated by Lactantius. It can be imagined that Constantine himself, Crispus and Constantine II all had eunuch chamberlains too, as well as other members of the imperial family, such as the Caesar Dalmatius. Imperial women would also have employed eunuchs; in his *Letter to the Athenians* Julian mentions that when he was summoned to Milan in 355 Eusebia communicated with him through her eunuchs.²⁹ This brings us neatly to the second group studied in this chapter.

IMPERIAL WOMEN: WIVES

Beginning with wives and with Constantius II, Eusebia, his second wife, easily dominates discussion of the group given some well-known episodes in which she appears. She is famous in particular for her part in the story of Julian: defending him at court in the aftermath of the execution of his half-brother the Caesar Gallus in 354, advocating that Julian be sent to study in Athens in the summer of 355, and supporting or even suggesting that Julian be sent to Gaul as Caesar towards the end of the same year (and presenting him with a collection of books as a wedding gift to take with him).³⁰ A number of sources refer to the role of Eusebia in Constantius' reign, Ammianus himself and Zosimus (presumably drawing upon Eunapius), but especially Julian, who wrote a speech of thanks to her in *c.* 356, recording her assistance and good character, though he also touched on her part in his life in a very different text, his *Letter to the Athenians* of 361, justifying his opposition to his cousin.³¹ Eusebia also featured in the

²⁸ Amm. Marc. 16.7.5, trans. Rolfe, vol. 1: 227–229.

²⁹ Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 274b.

³⁰ *PLRE* 1: 300–301 (Eusebia). For discussion of all this see, for instance, Tougher 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Aujoulat 1983; Rodríguez Gervás 2004: 134–138; and also Harries 2012: 262–267; James 2013: 96, 106–107, 109, 111. See now too Girotti 2016.

³¹ On the *Letter to the Athenians* see now Humphries 2012.

lost church history of the “Arian” (rather Anomoean, or Eunomian) Philostorgius, written *c.* 430 but known primarily from the epitome of the text produced by Photius in the ninth century.³² It relates that because Constantius was so devoted to her he recalled Theophilus the Indian (one of Philostorgius’ heroes) from exile in order to cure her of hysteria.³³ The *Suda* reports in addition that Eusebia was furious with Leontius the bishop of Tripolis (a supporter of Aetius and Eunomius) since he did not pay his respects to her when she was receiving bishops at (probably) the Council of Sirmium of 358, and “urged [Constantius] to exact punishment for it”, but he calmed her and sent her back to the women’s quarters.³⁴ The *Epitome de Caesaribus* stresses Constantius’ devotion to her too.³⁵ Something of her special status is also conveyed by the fact (reported by Ammianus) that Constantius renamed the Pontic diocese “Pietas” in her honour (discussed further below).³⁶

Thus Eusebia was the focus for much comment, by both contemporaries and later authors, but there are oddities about Ammianus’ assertion concerning her influence in the reign of Constantius. He is clearly criticising it in the obituary, but in his narrative he has focused primarily on her support of Julian, presumably a positive role in his eyes. Perhaps he has in mind the more sinister actions attributed to her, and the sinister interpretations of her ostensibly positive actions, such as the idea that she advocated Julian’s going to Gaul because she did not want to go herself, or that he might be killed there, or the assertion that she engineered the childlessness of Julian and his wife Helena (an assertion that Harries sees as “embedded in the literary tradition” of women as suspected poisoners).³⁷ One has the clear sense that Ammianus knows more about her than he has recorded in his history and perhaps expects his readers to know more too. His story about Assyria the wife of Barbatio (Constantius’ Master of Infantry in Gaul) who was concerned that her husband would marry

³² For Philostorgius see, for instance, Amidon 2007; Meyer 2011; Treadgold 2010: 126–134; Ferguson 2005: 125–163; Marasco 2003: 257–284.

³³ Philostorgius 4.7, Amidon 2007: 67–68.

³⁴ Philostorgius 7.6a, *Suda*, L 254 Leontius, Amidon 2007: 96–97.

³⁵ *Epit. de Caes.* 42.19–20. This brings to mind, and anticipates, Procopius’ famous remarks on Justinian’s feelings for Theodora, for example, *Wars* 1.25.4.

³⁶ *Amm. Marc.* 17.7.6.

³⁷ *Amm. Marc.* 15.8.3 (perhaps Eusebia did not want to go to Gaul), 16.10.18–19 (ensuring childlessness of Helena and Julian); Zos. 3.1.3 (the idea that Julian would get himself killed in Gaul). Harries 2012: 263.

Eusebia after the anticipated death of the emperor adds to this sense of the visibility and allure of the empress (“conspicuous among many women for the beauty of her person”; *decore corporis inter multas feminas excellentis*), as well as being a rare mention of a woman in the history; it is well known that Ammianus does not talk much about women.³⁸ The *Epitome de Caesaribus*, written very close in time to Ammianus’ history, certainly seems to know more about her. Remarking that Constantius “was addicted to the love of eunuchs, courtiers, and wives” (*Spadonum aulicorumque amori deditus et uxorum*) it then asserts “from wives, many whom he obtained, he especially delighted in Eusebia, who was indeed elegant, but, through Adamantiae and Gorgoniae and other dangerous abettors, harmful of her husband’s reputation, contrary to what is customary for more upright females whose precepts often aid their husbands” (*Sed ex coniugibus, quas plurimas sortitus est, praecipue Eusebiam dilexit, decoram quidem, verum per Adamantias et Gorgonias et alia importuna ministeria vexantem famam viri, contra quam feminis modestioribus mos est, quarum saepe praecepta maritos iuvant*).³⁹

It must be acknowledged, however, that Ammianus speaks of wives in the plural so the target seems to be not just Eusebia (Eutropius also speaks of “wives”, and Mamertinus speaks of “women” in the plural). Constantius’ third wife was a certain Faustina, whom he married in *c.* 361, following the death of Eusebia in *c.* 360 (21.6.4).⁴⁰ Since Constantius married Faustina shortly before his own death (she was pregnant when he died),⁴¹ it seems unlikely that stories of her undue influence with her husband would have had time to develop, though it is still noticeable that Ammianus reveals next to nothing about her.⁴² This leaves Constantius’ first wife,

³⁸ Amm. Marc. 18.3.2, trans. Rolfé, vol.1: 419. On Ammianus’ treatment of women see, for instance, Sabbah 1992; Barnes 1998: 120–126.

³⁹ *Epit. de Caes.* 42.19–20, trans. Banchich 2009: 33. On the apparent female helpers/servants Adamantia and Gorgonia (not otherwise known) see Rodríguez Gervás 2004: 136, who argues that they are part of the evidence pointing to the fact that Eusebia was trying to create her own power group at court. However, an anonymous reviewer of this chapter commented that “the use of plural names suggests a generic reference to women with derogatory names (or nicknames) that implied certain unflattering characteristics. Hence: ‘but with the assistance of the sort of women known as “Adamantia” [i.e. Hardass] and “Gorgonia” [i.e. Gorgon-faced] and other troublesome assistants”.

⁴⁰ *PLRE* 1: 326 (Faustina).

⁴¹ She gave birth to a daughter named Constantia who went on to become the first wife of Gratian in *c.* 374: Amm. Marc. 21.15.6, 29.6.7. On this Constantia see now McEvoy 2016.

⁴² *PLRE* 1: 221 (Constantia 2).

whom he married in 335/336, in the thirtieth year of Constantine's rule.⁴³ Her name is not known, but her relationship to Constantius is: she was his cousin, being the daughter of Julius Constantius, Constantine the Great's half-brother.⁴⁴ Virtually nothing else is known about this woman, but since she was the sister of Gallus (their mother was Galla) and the half-sister of Julian perhaps she played a role in saving them during the Great Massacre of 337. If so, however, she was clearly unable to save her several other male relatives who were killed at this time, including her own father.⁴⁵

It is hard to know, then, exactly what Ammianus and others were thinking when they criticised Constantius for being excessively influenced by his wives. Perhaps the assertion was more of a convenient rhetorical tool to beat Constantius with, based on the evident profile Eusebia had during the reign, akin to how Suetonius, for instance, emphasised the power of wives and freedmen under Claudius.⁴⁶ Yet the more obvious role that eunuchs played in the reign should give pause for thought; this suggests there is something more concrete behind the view that wives were influential too. The declaration does at least have the virtue of making us think about the wives of Constantius, and the wives of the sons of Constantine in general.

Turning to Constantine II, he was already married at the time of his younger brother Constantius' marriage, but nothing is known of his wife's identity or her role in the reign of her husband.⁴⁷ Since it is familiar that Constantine the Great favoured keeping marriage within the family, it is possible that he too married a cousin.⁴⁸ Constantine had sought to unite the two branches of the family of his father Constantius I by intermarriage; in addition to the union of Constantius II and his unnamed cousin there was in 335⁴⁹ also Constantine's daughter Constantina and Hannibalianus,

⁴³ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.49. On the year see *PLRE* 1 (335); Barnes 1982: 45 (336).

⁴⁴ They shared the same father, Constantius I, but had different mothers, Theodora and Helena respectively. *PLRE* 1: 226 (Iulius Constantius 7).

⁴⁵ For the massacre see Burgess 2008.

⁴⁶ Suet., *Claud.* 29.

⁴⁷ *PLRE* 1: 223 (Fl. Claudius Constantinus 3).

⁴⁸ Barnes 2011: 164–165, suggests the daughter of Flavius Optatus, consul for 334, possibly a relative of Constantine's mother Helena, he argues. For the idea that Constantine II married a cousin see also Woods 2011: 195, who makes the suggestion in relation to Constantine II minting coins featuring Theodora, the wife of Constantius I and mother of Constantine the Great's half-brothers: see below.

⁴⁹ Or perhaps 336: Barnes 2011: 166.

the son of Dalmatius (brother of Julius Constantius).⁵⁰ Timothy Barnes has suggested that Hannibalianus' brother, also called Dalmatius, married his cousin Helena at this time too,⁵¹ but this is hypothetical, and it seems likely that it would have been mentioned in relation to Julian himself marrying Helena in 355.

Turning to Constans, although he reigned for a longer time than Constantine II, until 350, his case is problematic too, though certainly intriguing.⁵² His father Constantine engaged him to Olympias, the daughter of a trusted official, the Praetorian Prefect Ablabius (who also died in the massacre of 337).⁵³ Given Constantine's predilection for keeping marriage within the dynasty, Chausson has suggested that Olympias was also a relative, her mother being a female of the Constantinian family.⁵⁴ What is more arresting is the curious fact that Constans seems never to have actually married this woman; Ammianus refers to her as the betrothed of Constans (*sponsam*).⁵⁵ Even if there is any truth to the assertions that Constans sexually preferred men to women there is no reason for him not to have married.⁵⁶ One would have thought that he would have been concerned to produce an heir; his elder brother Constantius II certainly was, to the extent that he married three times. According to Julian, Constantius was tormented by his childlessness, and considered it a punishment for the murders of his relatives.⁵⁷ The lack of offspring of the sons of Constantine is one of the major political problems they faced, one that Julian did not surmount either. It was a daughter of Constantine and Fausta, Constantina, who managed to produce a child during her lifetime that outlived her, a daughter by Gallus.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ *Anonymous Valesianus* 35. *PLRE* 1: 222 (Constantina 2), 407 (Hannabalianus 2), 240–241 (Fl. Dalmatius 6), 241 (Dalmatius 7).

⁵¹ Barnes 2011: 151. On Dalmatius see now Marcos 2014, who references Barnes' suggestion as to the identity of Dalmatius' wife (755). One wonders if Crispus' widow Helena was still alive and available as a possible bride.

⁵² *PLRE* 1: 220 (Fl. Iul. Constans 3). He was born in either 320 or 323, so died aged thirty or twenty-seven.

⁵³ *Amm. Marc.* 20.11.3. *PLRE* 1: 642 (Olympias 1), 3–4 (Fl. Ablabius 4).

⁵⁴ Chausson 2007: 150–152.

⁵⁵ *Amm. Marc.* 20.11.3. Ammianus records that Constantius II married her off to the king of Armenia, Arsaces III. One wonders if Magnentius thought of marrying her.

⁵⁶ On the sexual proclivities of Constans see *Aur. Vict.*, *Caes.* 41. *Eutr.* 10.9 and *Amm. Marc.* 16.7.5 are more vague.

⁵⁷ Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 270d–271a.

⁵⁸ Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 272d.

In the matter of wives of the sons of Constantine then, Eusebia is the most illuminated figure, but in general tantalising and challenging questions remain, as about Constantine's own wives Minervina and Fausta, for example, who was Minervina, and what was the fate of both Minervina and Fausta; Chausson's suggestion that Constantine married a third wife is, however, unconvincing.⁵⁹ Constantine's own marriage to Fausta in 307 was dynastic, since she was the daughter of the emperor Maximian (Diocletian's original colleague) and the sister of his son the emperor Maxentius.⁶⁰ As Harries has emphasised, Fausta was also the sister (possibly half-sister) of Constantine's stepmother Theodora,⁶¹ so there was an element of keeping it in the family at this time too. Constantine's apparent predilection for intrafamily marriage was also observed by Constantius II himself. When he appointed Gallus his Caesar in 351 Gallus had to marry his cousin Constantina, and when Julian became Constantius' Caesar in 355 he had to marry his cousin Helena.⁶² It seems likely that it was this trend for cousin-cousin marriage that led Julian to describe some intradynastic marriages as "marriages that were no marriages".⁶³

These intradynastic marriages, however, also beg questions about Constantius II's other marriages. His father had married him to a cousin, but when Constantius came to choose his own brides he appears to have followed a different path. Eusebia, whom Constantius married *c.* 353 when he was in the West to deal with the usurper Magnentius, was of a distinguished Greek family from Thessalonica. Her father was probably Flavius Eusebius, the consul of 347; her brothers Flavius Eusebius and Flavius Hypatius were both consuls for 359, benefitting from their sister's position it seems.⁶⁴ Regarding his third wife Faustina, nothing is known of

⁵⁹ Chausson 2007: 109–116. This suggestion is also rejected by Barnes 2011: 150–152.

⁶⁰ *PLRE* 1: 325–326 (Fl. Maxima Fausta).

⁶¹ Harries 2012: 259. She notes that Constantine's marriage to Fausta "made him his own father's brother in law" (though of course Constantius was already dead by the time of the marriage).

⁶² Gallus and Constantina: Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 272d; Julian and Helena: Amm. Marc. 15.8.18. Note that Helena is described as a virgin.

⁶³ *Or.* 7.228c–d. Note the fact that Constans did not marry Olympias, as Chausson 2002: 154 suggests.

⁶⁴ Julian discourses on the family in his *Speech of Thanks to Eusebia* 107d–110d, 116a–b. On her brothers see Amm. Marc. 21.6.4, 29.2.9. *PLRE* 1: 307–308 (Flavius Eusebius 39), 308–309 (Fl. Eusebius 40), 448–449 (Flavius Hypatius 4). The *Theodosian Code* preserves a law of Constantius II which includes the detail that the property of her family was exempt from taxation: *Cod. Theod.* 11.1.1.

her family, though presumably Constantius married her in the East in Antioch when he was based there towards the end of his reign. Thus in his own selections of wife Constantius looked outside the family, perhaps seeking to make connections with local eastern elites if not just with beautiful women. In this Constantius could be following alternative models of marriage alliance in the family; it has been remarked, for instance, that Constantine arranged unions of other members of the family with local elites in Rome, for example, the marriage of his half-siblings Eutropia with the senator Virius Nepotianus and Julius Constantius with Galla, the sister of Vulcacius Rufinus and Neratius Cerealis.⁶⁵ After the death of Galla, Julius Constantius in about 330 married Basilina, from a distinguished Bithynian family; she was the daughter of Julius Julianus the Praetorian Prefect of the East.⁶⁶ Constantius II's marriages to Eusebia and Faustina thus seem to echo other Constantinian behaviour. Alternatively, perhaps Constantius simply had no choice but to look for brides outside the family, as it seems there were no remaining appropriate candidates to be his wife.⁶⁷

IMPERIAL WOMEN: SISTERS, AUNTS, MOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS

The subject of imperial women in the time of the sons of Constantine does not just raise the topic of wives but also of other family relations: sisters, aunts, mothers and grandmothers. For the sons of Constantine the topic of sisters is probably the most obvious one: the daughters of Constantine do have a part to play in the period. The figures of Constantina and Helena have already been touched on. There is the possibility that there was a third sister, Constantia, but it is probable that the use of that name by some sources is just a matter of confusion, that is, a misspelling of the name Constantina.⁶⁸ As has been seen, Constantius II continued to use his sisters in the same way that his father had done, to create intradynastic marriages.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Harries 2014: 208. *PLRE* 1: 625 (Virius Nepotianus 7), 382 (Galla 1).

⁶⁶ *PLRE* 1: 148 (Basilina). For Julius Julianus see, for instance, Vanderspoel 1999.

⁶⁷ One might wonder though why he did not think of taking Olympias as his wife.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Chausson 2007: 115–116. There seems to have been some confusion also: Theophanes says that “Constantia” was also called Helena, and Michael the Syrian records that Helena was also called “Constantia” (Amidon 2007: 220 n. 46, 224). See also the comments of Barnes 2011: 150–152.

Constantina, however, presents a far more interesting figure than just a marriage pawn.⁶⁹ Philostorgius is notable for the stories he tells about her, reporting other details of her career, just as he does for Eusebia as noted above. In 350, at the time of the death of Constans and the usurpation of Magnentius, Constantina allegedly appointed Vetranio Caesar in order to present opposition in the West to the usurper (Constantius II being on the eastern frontier at the time).⁷⁰ The epitome of Philostorgius asserts, “She was regarded as having the power to do this because the father of all of them, while still alive, had crowned her with a diadem and named her Augusta” (Ἐδόκει δὲ δύνασθαι τὴν πρᾶξι, διότι ζῶν ὁ κοινὸς αὐτῶν πατὴρ διαδήματι τε αὐτὴν ἐταίνωσεν καὶ Αὐγοῦσταν). It is added that Constantius confirmed his sister’s decision. The *Passion of Artemius*, which utilised Philostorgius, asserts that Constantius was apprised of the situation regarding Vetranio by his sister’s letters.⁷¹ The factual accuracy of these assertions of Philostorgius concerning the role of Constantina in creating Vetranio Caesar at the time of Magnentius’ usurpation has been called into question by Harries.⁷² She declares that the depiction of Constantina as “a mover of events, swaying the choice of armies and controlling, to a limited extent, the imperial succession” is anachronistic, Philostorgius’ presentation of her being shaped by his knowledge of the Theodosian empresses of his own day, which also serves to explain why he ascribes the title of Augusta to her. However, can Philostorgius’ account really be questioned to such an extent? Why would he have bothered to reshape Constantina in this way? Is it not more likely that Philostorgius was simply following the sources he had for these events, for example, possibly the lost anonymous “Arian” history?⁷³ It has been recognised that Philostorgius did have a distinctive outlook on events and was particularly interested in secular affairs; he clearly was alert to dynastic history, in which women played a key part, for example, his telling of the fates of Crispus and Fausta, the poisoning of Constantine by his brothers and the just revenge Constantius

⁶⁹ On Constantina see now also Hillner 2017: esp. 68–70.

⁷⁰ Philostorgius 3.22, Amidon 2007: 57. This is also related by the *Chronicon Paschale* (trans. Whitby and Whitby 1989: 29) and by Theophanes (Amidon 2007: 220).

⁷¹ *Passion of Artemius* 11, Amidon 2007: 60.

⁷² Harries 2014: 197–198. See also Maraval 2013: 91, who is of the view that Philostorgius has exaggerated the role played by Constantina, if indeed the story was not simply invented as propaganda for Constantius II.

⁷³ On the lost “Arian” history see, for instance, Ferguson 2005: 62–74; Treadgold 2010: 121–122.

II took, and the role of Eudoxia in the fall of the eunuch Eutropius under Arcadius.⁷⁴ In such a light it can be well understood why he would be concerned to record details of the career of Constantina not found elsewhere; as has been noted, he does the same with Eusebia. Perhaps Constantina's later role as the wife of Gallus, whom Philostorgius was concerned to defend as a friend of his heroes Eunomius and Aetius, also gave him a particular interest in her. On the assertion that Constantina had the title of Augusta, if indeed it had no basis in truth, perhaps this was said at the time to justify her involvement in the promotion of Vetranio, as Barnes has suggested⁷⁵; that would make more sense than Philostorgius attributing the title to her off his own bat. In any case, Harries can contemplate that Constantina played some part in the promotion of Vetranio: "If Constantine's elder daughter was indeed involved, her role would have been more discreet, a facilitating behind the scenes perhaps of the compromise which led to Vetranio's staged resignation of the purple to Constantius and his subsequent withdrawal into a well-funded retirement."⁷⁶ Yet the crisis of 350–351 was hardly a time for business as usual and it is surely possible that Constantina was thrust into action. Other historians are open to this. Bleckmann believes that she did promote Vetranio, though for her own selfish reasons, seeking him as a husband⁷⁷; Drinkwater questions this hypothesis but still thinks that Constantina had a part to play in diplomatic negotiations with Vetranio, perhaps from Constantinople.⁷⁸ The image of an active forceful Constantina certainly appears to match others of her that exist, as will be seen.

In relation to events in 350 and the role of Constantina in them, it is also interesting that, according to the sixth-century historian Peter the Patrician, Magnentius proposed a marriage alliance with the Constantinian dynasty, seeking Constantina ("Constantia") as a wife and offering Constantius II his daughter (presumably indicating that Constantius II was unmarried in 350, that his first wife had died by this date).⁷⁹ This alliance did not come to pass, though it is possible that Magnentius' eventual

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Amidon 2007: xviii, xxi, xxii; Ferguson 2005: 126–127 n. 10.

⁷⁵ Bleckmann, 1994: 36–42, accepts that she was Augusta, in relation to her marriage to Hannibalianus. Barnes 2011: 219 n. 15 remarks that it was "presumably invented in 350 to give her a spurious seniority to her brother Constantius, and thus to legitimize her investment of Vetranio as an Augustus".

⁷⁶ Harries 2014: 197–198.

⁷⁷ Bleckmann 1994: 42–47.

⁷⁸ Drinkwater 2000: 152–153.

⁷⁹ Peter the Patrician, fr. 16. See Banchich 2015: 145–147, F 213. *PLRE* 1: 532 (Magnus Magnentius).

bride, Justina, had Constantinian connections; it has been suggested, for instance, that she was the granddaughter of Julius Constantius and Galla, a child of their daughter and Justus.⁸⁰ Constantina was however married to Gallus in 351, and her relationship with him is equally thought-provoking, though one is faced with the hostile, if arresting, account of Ammianus.⁸¹ He paints her and her association with Gallus in dark hues, conjuring up an image of them as partners in savagery, with Gallus being encouraged by Constantina.⁸² He emphasises the imperial pride of this Constantinian woman: “to [Gallus’] cruelty his wife was besides a serious incentive, a woman beyond measure presumptuous because of her kinship to the emperor, and previously joined in marriage by her father Constantine with his brother’s son, King Hannibalianus” (*Cuius acerbitati uxor grave accesserat incentivum, germanitate Augusti turgida supra modum, quam Hanniballiano regi fratris filio antehac Constantinus iunxerat pater*).⁸³ Despite the hostile rhetoric it is clear that Constantina was indeed a significant member of the Constantinian dynasty.⁸⁴ Her producing of a child with Gallus, even though a girl, can only have added to this impression since Constantius II did not have any children.

It is vital to interrogate Constantina’s career further. What had she been doing since 337, the year of the killing of her husband Hannibalinus, and before 350, the year of the death of Constans and the usurpation of Magnentius? When did she come to the West? She had a villa in Rome, and her patronage in the city is well known.⁸⁵ In the 340s she built the basilica of St Agnes the virgin martyr on the Via Nomentana (as well as a monastery), and next to it her own mausoleum, better known as the church of S. Costanza.⁸⁶ A fourteen-line hexameter inscription in Constantina’s voice (possibly composed by herself: Trout 2015) recorded the dedication in the church. The first six lines declare:

⁸⁰ Chausson 2007: 97–105, 161–162.

⁸¹ See, for example, Sabbah 1992: 97; Bleckmann 1994: 32–33, 59–63, 2011: 80–81. On Constantina see also the brief comments of Rodríguez Gervás 2004: 138.

⁸² Amm. Marc. 14.1.2–8, 7.4, 9.3, 11.6, 22.

⁸³ Amm. Marc. 14.1.2, trans. Rolfe, vol. 1: 5.

⁸⁴ Trout 2015: 277 comments: “Unfortunately, the most striking near-contemporary portrait of Constantina is the malicious one left by a scandalized Ammianus.”

⁸⁵ For her villa: Amm. Marc. 21.1.5.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Trout 2015; Harries 2012: 262, 266–267; Jones 2007; Brubaker 1997: 59–60. On the mausoleum see, for instance, Johnson 2009: 139–156.

I, Constantina, venerating God and dedicated to Christ,
 having provided all the expenses with devoted mind
 at divine bidding and with the great help of Christ,
 consecrated this *templum* of Agnes, victorious virgin,
 because she has prevailed over the temples of all earthly works,
 [Here] where the loftiest roof gleams with gold.⁸⁷

The inscription begins with Constantina asserting her own name (*Constantina dm [deum] venerans Xpoque dicata*), and the first letter of each line also spells out her name and addresses God (*Constantina Deo*).⁸⁸ Another inscription on a statue base (found adjacent to the Lateran basilica), a dedication to her by Flavius Gavianus the *praepositus rerum privatum*, also records Constantina's presence in Rome in the reigns of her brothers (337–340), so she presumably came to Rome soon after the killing of her husband. The inscription emphasises her imperial credentials. It runs:

To a woman begotten from the divine race deriving from the founder of the Roman empire, daughter of the deified Constantine, pious, the greatest, and sister of our lords Constans and Constantius, perpetual Augusti, our lady Flavia Constantina, noble and venerable (*nob(ili)/ac venerabili*). Flavius Gavianus, of perfectissimus rank, supervisor of the imperial treasury forever of hers.⁸⁹

Constantina's presence in Rome is also attested by the *Book of Pontiffs*, which relates that after his return from exile Pope Liberius (352–366) lived at the cemetery of St Agnes with Constantina (described as Augusta),

⁸⁷ *ILCV* 1768, ll. 1–6, trans. Curran 2000: 128, followed by Jones 2007: 116–117. See also the translation of Trout 2015: 265, “I, Constantina, venerating God and consecrated to Christ, / having devoutly provided for all expenses, / with considerable divine inspiration and Christ assisting, / have dedicated the temple of the victorious virgin Agnes, / which surpasses the workmanship of temples and all earthly (buildings) / that the golden gables of lofty roofs illumine with reddish glow / For the name of Christ is celebrated in this hall, / who alone was able to vanquish infernal death / and, borne to heaven, alone carry in the triumph, / restoring the name of Adam and the body and all the limbs / released from the shadows of death and dark night. / Therefore, martyr and devotee of Christ, you will possess this worthy gift / From our resources through the long ages, / O happy maid, of the noteworthy name Agnes.”

⁸⁸ See also Harries 2014: 210.

⁸⁹ *CIL* 6.40790: Chausson 2007: 114 n. 45; Bleckmann 2011: 81; Trout 2015: 266, n. 9. Note that the inscription was changed to name just Constans and Constantius II (340–350) but it seems originally to have included all the brothers: *LSA* 1563 (Machado).

and hoped she would intercede for him with her brother Constantius, though she refused to do so. In this case, however, the chronology is awry, as Constantina was already dead by the time Liberius returned to Rome in 357; nonetheless the story underscores the significance of the city and site for associations with this daughter of Constantine, and the role she could play in events of the period.⁹⁰

After her death in 354 Constantina was buried in a porphyry sarcophagus in the mausoleum, and her sister Helena was to be buried here too after her death in Gaul.⁹¹ Helena evidently lived with her husband, the Caesar Julian, in Gaul, being with him in Paris when he was acclaimed Augustus by his troops in the spring of 360,⁹² but like her sister Constantina she also spent time in Rome. She was present in the city during her brother Constantius II's famous visit there in 357.⁹³ Perhaps she had resided there too before her marriage to Julian in 355; the history of her life before this event is unknown, but its possibilities should at least be considered. It is worth recalling that Constantius' wife Eusebia also visited Rome, not just in 357 but earlier too (in 356, when Constantius was on campaign across the Rhine), as referred to in Julian's *Speech of Thanks* to her.⁹⁴ Rome witnessed the presence of another imperial woman in the time of the sons of Constantine: Eutropia, half-sister of Constantine and thus aunt of the sons of Constantine.⁹⁵ She is discovered there at the time of the usurpation of Magnentius, when her son Nepotianus was acclaimed emperor but swiftly crushed by agents of the usurper; both he and his mother were killed.⁹⁶ Thus, like Constantina, it seems, other members of the imperial family are found responding to the crisis of the death of Constans in order to exert Constantinian authority in the West. But the surfacing of Eutropia in 350

⁹⁰ On the Liberius and Constantina story see, for instance, Harries 2014: 211–212; Barnes 2011: 152; Jones 2007: 120–121.

⁹¹ Amm. Marc. 21.1.5, “he had sent to Rome the remains of his deceased wife Helena, to be laid to rest in his villa near the city on the Via Nomentana, where also her sister Constantina, formerly the wife of Gallus, was buried” (trans. Rolfe, vol. 2: 93). Rolfe, vol. 1: 4 n. 1, says Ammianus wrongly calls Constantia Constantina, but Ammianus is correct. As for Eusebia, it is possible that she was buried in Holy Apostles in Constantinople: Grierson 1962: 40.

⁹² Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 284c.

⁹³ Amm. Marc. 16.10.18.

⁹⁴ Julian., *Speech of Thanks to Eusebia* 129b–d. See Bidez 1932: 104–105 n. 2.

⁹⁵ *PLRE* 1: 316 (Eutropia 2), 624 (Iul. Nepotianus 5).

⁹⁶ Athanasius, *Apol. ad Const.* 6. Julian., *Or.* 2.58c–d, on the crimes of Marcellinus (agent of Magnentius) against those connected with the imperial family, including the killing of both men and women.

begs questions. What had she been doing since 337 (when her possible husband Virius Nepotianus, consul for 336, might have been a victim of the infamous massacre too)? When did she and her son come to Rome?⁹⁷ What was the attitude of the sons of Constantine to this surviving aunt? Athanasius indicates that Eutropia well received him after he came to Rome in 339.⁹⁸ It is perhaps telling that while Mamertinus in Julian's reign presents Nepotianus as an unworthy usurper, Julian in his panegyrics on Constantius emphasises his just war of revenge on Magnentius, who had committed crimes not just against the state but also against Constantius' own house, which might suggest that he is thinking of more than the killing of Constans.⁹⁹

In relation to the presence of imperial women in Rome in the time of the sons of Constantine it is instructive to think of the case of Helena, Constantine the Great's mother and thus grandmother of the sons of Constantine.¹⁰⁰ After her death in *c.* 329 (not long after her return from her famous visit to the Holy Land—which began *c.* 326—and around the time when coinage featuring her abruptly stopped) she was buried in a porphyry sarcophagus in a mausoleum on the Via Labicana, next to the basilica of Sts Marcellinus and Peter.¹⁰¹ This mausoleum and basilica were built on her own estate of fundus Laurentus, just outside the Aurelian walls (she owned Palatium Sessorianum).¹⁰² Drijvers has remarked on “the special connection between this south-eastern corner of Rome and the empress-mother”, and has argued that Helena had probably lived in Rome after 312 and in the 320s, before travelling to the Holy Land.¹⁰³ As with Constantina, statues were also dedicated to Helena in Rome. One was dedicated to her as Augusta between 325 and 330 by the senator and count Julius Maximilianus, in which she is identified as the mother of

⁹⁷ Zos. 2.43, asserts that Nepotianus came to Rome in 350, but it is possible that he was already there, or in the vicinity, with his mother.

⁹⁸ Athanasius, *Apol. ad Const.* 6. See Barnes 1993: 53.

⁹⁹ *Pan. Lat.* 3 (11) 13, Julian., *Or.* 1.33d.

¹⁰⁰ *PLRE* 1: 410–411 (Fl. Iulia Helena 3). For Helena see especially Drijvers 1992, and now 2011, but also Barnes 2011: 30–45, 148–150; Rodríguez Gervás 2004: 126–131.

¹⁰¹ On her visit to the Holy Land see Drijvers 1992: 55–72; 2011: 137–143 (questioning the common use of the term “pilgrimage”, and emphasising that it was a visit to the eastern provinces in general), and Hunt 1982: 28–49. See also Lenski 2004: 114–115. On the coinage see Drijvers 1992: 73. Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.46, asserts that Constantine was with her when she died; Drijvers suggests she died in late 328 in the West, perhaps at Trier.

¹⁰² On Helena's mausoleum see Johnson 2009: 110–118.

¹⁰³ Drijvers 1992: 33, 34, 59. See now also Drijvers 2016.

Constantine the Augustus and the grandmother of the Caesars Constantine II and Constantius II.¹⁰⁴ Another was dedicated between 325 and 330 by a *praepositus* of the patrimony:

To our venerable lady Helena Augusta, mother of our lord Constantinus the greatest, victorious and triumphant, forever Augustus. [Set up by] Flavius Pistius, of perfectissimus rank, supervisor of the imperial patrimony (*praepositus rerum privatarum*), most devoted to their piety.¹⁰⁵

The statue base of the first of these inscriptions was found in 1571 in the vineyard of S. Croce Gerusalemme, part of the Sessorian palace, while the second base is now lost but was originally discovered near the Lateran basilica. Of the men who dedicated the statues, one was an aristocrat displaying devotion to Helena and her family, the other an equestrian official in charge of imperial property also seeking to praise his employers. Thus Helena seems to have carved out a special place for herself in Rome, a situation echoed by subsequent Constantinian women such as Constantina and Eutropia.¹⁰⁶ The city of Constantine—“Constantinople”—may have become the Queen of Cities, but under the Constantinians it seems that Rome became a City of Queens.¹⁰⁷

Harries has recently discussed the presence of Helena in Rome and her role in setting a precedent for Christian patronage by elite women, anticipating the activities of Constantina in the city.¹⁰⁸ This activity also relates to Helena’s visit to the Holy Land, and in addition the activities of other imperial women. Eutropia, wife of Maximian and mother of Fausta and Maxentius, reported to Constantine in letters the occurrence of pagan activity at the oak of Mamre in Palestine, a site associated with the life of

¹⁰⁴ *LSA* 835. On the Latin Helena inscriptions see also Drijvers 1992: 45–52. Julius Maximilianus was probably *consularius aquarum* from 330: *Cod. Theod.* 15.2.1. The absence of Crispus from the inscription might suggest that it dates from after his death, not just from when Helena became Augusta. For another dedication to Helena by the same man, but in a more fragmentary condition, see *LSA* 1540.

¹⁰⁵ *LSA* 1261.

¹⁰⁶ For Helena as a model for subsequent imperial women in general see Brubaker 1997.

¹⁰⁷ On the presence of imperial women in late antique Rome see now also Hillner 2017. The number of female imperial burials in Rome perhaps adds another dimension to the assertion of Ammianus (25.10.5) that Julian should have been buried in Rome, beyond the idea of Ammianus’ Romanization of Julian (a technique adopted previously by Claudius Mamertinus anyway).

¹⁰⁸ Harries 2012: 261–262; 2014: 207–209.

Abraham, which led the emperor to order the construction of a church there.¹⁰⁹ Constantia, the daughter of Constantius I and Theodora and wife of Licinius I, was active after the Council of Nicaea in 325 urging certain “Arians” (including Eusebius of Nicomedia) to accept its decisions.¹¹⁰ While seeing these actions as creating important precedents of Christian patronage for elite women Harries understands the presence of Helena in Rome and her decision to take such actions in rather bleak terms. She presents this patronage activity as a way for these women to find a role for themselves, a way to deploy their “energies”, so in effect a substitute for political power; she suggests that “their removal from court, whether voluntary or not, could also be read as a failure to hold their own in the power game”.¹¹¹ More recently she has asserted that the imperial women “were (presumably) not obliged to live there”; seeking to understand why they lived in Rome, she conjures up an image of Constantine as a man whom female family members, even his own mother, did not want to be in close proximity to, so the decision to live at a distance is seen as a way of avoiding him rather than actively embracing a life in the city.¹¹² This image of Constantine and his relationship with Helena is reminiscent of the one imagined by Evelyn Waugh in his novel *Helena* (1950).

The view of a Constantine apparently willing to let imperial women go off and live where they liked is one I find hard to credit. For me, Constantine is nothing if not hard headed and pragmatic. Could Constantine have afforded to be indifferent to where these women were and what they were up to? Could he in fact have been utilising them in a more positive way? It seems more likely that he was interested in where they were and what they were doing, and maybe even had a hand in their activities. Harries herself points to this alternative interpretation when she remarks that “Helena, and later Constantina, were extensions of the imperial presence at Rome.”¹¹³ Perhaps Helena’s presence in Rome was a deliberate ploy to install a leading member of the Constantinian family in this prestigious location. Constantine was intensely alert to the need to foster good relations in Rome after his defeat of Maxentius in 312. Famously Maxentius

¹⁰⁹ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.51–53. See also Drijvers 1992: 71; Hunt 1997: 416.

¹¹⁰ Philostorgius 1.9. See also Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.27.2–4, 3.19.

¹¹¹ Harries 2012: 261.

¹¹² Harries 2014: 208–209. For the view that Helena and Eutropia were escaping Constantine by going to the Holy Land see also Lenski 2004: 114–117, though note the comments of Drijvers 2011: 142–143.

¹¹³ Harries 2014: 207.

had developed a base for himself in Rome, living in it as emperor from 306 to 312, a novelty for the period; Constantine's appropriation of Maxentian buildings and monuments is well known.¹¹⁴ When Constantine had to move on from Rome it presumably made strategic sense to leave a family contact there. As Drijvers remarks, Helena "is likely to have embodied the imperial presence in Rome in particular because Constantine hardly spent any time" there (he also sees Helena's visit to the East as initiated by the court and assisting in Constantine's agenda, both political and religious).¹¹⁵ If this was the case, it could also apply to other imperial women under the sons of Constantine. It is clear that these women had a vital part to play as representatives of their family, and could serve as key channels of communication and patronage.

IMPERIAL WOMEN: COINAGE, TITLES AND HONOURS

Helena continued to have value for her grandsons too, for from 337 until 340 bronze coins were issued commemorating her, struck in Constantinople, Rome and Trier.¹¹⁶ Identified as an Augusta, she was shown in profile on the obverse (with the legend FL IUL HELENAE AUG), and on the reverse was a personification of pax publica, public peace (with the legend PAX PUBLICA).¹¹⁷ At the same time were issued bronze coins struck at the same mints commemorating yet another imperial female, Theodora the wife of Constantius I (and stepmother of Constantine the Great, [step]daughter of Maximian and thus [half]sister of Fausta, stepgrandmother and aunt of the sons of Constantine, and grandmother to Dalmatius and Hannibalianus). She is also identified as an Augusta, a title she is not known to have borne when alive, if indeed she was dead at this date; she is shown in profile, with the legend FL MAX THEODORAE AUG. On the reverse of this coin is a personification of

¹¹⁴For Maxentius and Rome see, for instance, Cullhed 1994: 45–67; Curran 2000: 54–69; Van Dam 2011: 225–252. For Constantine's response to Maxentian Rome see Marlowe 2010; McFadden 2013; and for Constantine and Rome in general see Holloway 2004.

¹¹⁵Drijvers 2011: 135, 139–143. See also the comments of Rodríguez Gervás 2004: 128–131.

¹¹⁶Drijvers 1992: 44 says it was also struck at Lyons. On the coins featuring Constantinian women see also the discussion in the chapter in this volume by Eric R. Varner, who in addition discusses other possible images of them.

¹¹⁷Brubaker and Tobler 2000: 577. See also Drijvers 1992: 44; *RIC* 8: 7, 33–34 (Kent does not mention Lyons), 79.

pietas romana, Roman piety (with the legend PIETAS ROMANA), shown holding her right breast for an infant held on her left arm.¹¹⁸ Leslie Brubaker and Helen Tobler interpret these coins as a “response to the struggle for succession after Constantine’s death, which pitted Constantine’s own sons against the sons of his father’s second wife”, with the Helena coins representing the claim of the sons of Constantine and the Theodora coins that of her male descendants.¹¹⁹ This cannot be right as the mints issued both coins. John Vanderspoel and Michelle Mann argue that the “Theodora reverses...were designed to recall the dynastic imagery that had previously appeared on the coins of Fausta” (see below), so that Theodora is in effect a substitute for the disgraced Fausta (as her half-sister, they say) and speaks to the dynastic concerns of the sons of Fausta.¹²⁰ More recently Richard Burgess has argued that Constantine II was the architect of the coins (most of them are from Trier, where they were first minted), and that the design “must...be seen as an act of expiation to Theodora as the mother of Constantius I’s children and grandchildren...Their deaths were not intended to reflect poorly on her as a mother”; the inclusion of Helena likewise refers to her descendants and the prospect of peace within the empire and family.¹²¹ Burgess’ views have been further responded to by David Woods, who suggests that Constantine II was actually showing some degree of support for Theodora’s family, proposing that Constantine II’s wife was a cousin and thus a granddaughter of Theodora (just like the wife of Constantius II).¹²² These attempts to explain the iconography of the coins seem somewhat elaborate and not necessarily convincing. For instance, why would Constantius II and Constans issue the coins too if the message challenged their positions? They may have minted the coins in smaller numbers and less often, but they still minted them. J.P.C. Kent proposed that “the harmonious joint succession of the two families may have been the connotation originally intended”, which certainly seems more logical; Callu suggested that the issue began under Constantine I himself, reflecting his plans for the two

¹¹⁸ Burgess 2008: 22 asserts that the coin is commemorative and thus Theodora is dead. On the coinage see also the comments by John Vanderspoel in this volume.

¹¹⁹ Note though that the branch of Constantius and Theodora is represented not just by their sons but by a variety of male relatives.

¹²⁰ Vanderspoel and Mann 2002: 355.

¹²¹ Burgess 2008: 24. See also Maraval 2013: 33–34, 39–40.

¹²² Woods 2011: 193–196.

branches of the family to share power.¹²³ Whatever the interpretation of the designs it is nonetheless clear that they underscore the central place of female members of the imperial family within its ideology; these grannies represented the dynasty.¹²⁴

Certainly Constantine the Great had already celebrated imperial females on his coinage during his own lifetime. In 324 coins of his mother Helena and his wife Fausta were issued, at the same time as these women were honoured with the title of Augusta (the last empress to be called Augusta before Helena and Fausta was Galeria Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian and wife of Galerius, executed in *c.* 315).¹²⁵ The timing of these coins and the acclamation of the women as Augustae is seen as highly significant, for this was the moment when Constantine emerged as sole emperor after his defeat of Licinius at the battle of Chrysopolis.¹²⁶ The women played a useful part in the assertion of the triumph of the Constantinian dynasty. Fausta's coins describe her as Augusta (FLAV MAX FAUSTA AUG) and the reverse bears the legends SALUS REIPUBLICAE (well-being of the republic) or SPES REIPUBLICAE (hope of the republic), and depicts a female figure holding two babies.¹²⁷ Helena's describe her as FL HELENA AUGUSTA and the reverse bears the legend SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE (security of the republic), and depicts a female figure holding a lowered

¹²³ *RIC* 8: 7 n. 55; Callu 1974: 149–150.

¹²⁴ See also Hekster 2015: 231, who in relation to the coinage of Constantine I comments on Helena's significance as "founder of the family".

¹²⁵ See, for instance, *RIC* 7: 45, 53; Drijvers 1992: 39–43; Rodríguez Gervás 2004: 128–129. *PLRE* 1: 937 (Galeria Valeria).

¹²⁶ On Fausta and Helena becoming Augustae see, for instance, Harries 2012: 259, who remarks that this was "a step taken to advertise the strength of the Constantinian dynasty".

¹²⁷ On this image see, for instance, Vanderspoel and Mann 2002: 353, who argue that it portrays the "*Dea Nutrix*, a goddess of fertility. Fausta's ability to bear children, aided by the Romano-Celtic goddess, guaranteed SPES and SALVS." Fausta also seems to have been depicted on a solidus of Crispus from 324: *RIC* 7, Treveri 442. On the reverse featuring the legend "Felix progenies Constantini Aug" a female figure stands between two male figures facing each other and clasping hands, the female resting her hands on a shoulder of each one. The male figures are usually identified as the Caesars Crispus and Constantine II who were both consuls for 324, though Filippini 2016 now suggests they are Constantine II and Constantius II, the latter having become Caesar in 324. Other solidi from Trier depict Fausta as Augusta and on the reverse there is the legend PIETAS AUGUSTAE and an image of a nimbed enthroned female figure with a child on her lap, flanked by Felicitas on her right and Pietas on her left, and below each two genii holding a wreath: *RIC* 7, Treveri 443, 444, 445.

branch in her right hand.¹²⁸ Notably Constantine also issued coinage celebrating his half-sister Constantia. A rare bronze coin dated to 326–327 (or after her death, dated to not long after Helena’s death) and struck in Constantinople depicts Constantia with the legend *CONSTANTIA N F* (meaning *Nobilissima Femina*), and on the reverse the legend “Sister of Constantine Augustus”, and “*Pietas Publica*” within a wreath.¹²⁹ Significantly, Constantia, the widow of the emperor Licinius and the daughter of Constantius I, is not titled Augusta but *Nobilissima Femina*, an honour also borne previously by Helena and Fausta.

In relation to the sons of Constantine, the subject of coins and titles for imperial women raises a particular oddity, for none of their wives or sisters featured on coins or held the title of Augusta, unless one believes that Constantina was indeed given the title of Augusta. As for their mother Fausta, who had been an Augusta, she was dead, though their deceased grandmothers (presuming Theodora was indeed dead) were featured on coins as Augustas from 337 to 340. It is intriguing, as Brubaker and Tobler observe, that “In the aftermath of this high-profile use of empress coins in a political contest [in 337], after 340 there are no more empress coins for over forty years; nor did the emperors who followed Constantine name their wives or mothers augustae until 383, when Theodosios I revived both the title and the coin type” for his wife Flacilla.¹³⁰ Some explanation of these facts is called for; remarkably, Kent did not address them. Perhaps the sons of Constantine were more interested in promoting their own status rather than that of their wives, especially as there was more than one Augustus (until 350) rather than one single Augustus as was the case from 324 to 337 when Constantine reigned supreme with a multiplicity of Caesars. Perhaps the apparent demise of Fausta had also cast a shadow, or at least broke the pattern of depicting wives on coins. The fact that none of the wives of Constantius II (and as far as we know the wife of Constantine II; Constans seems not to have married anyway as has been seen) produced any children whilst he was alive might be thought also to account for the fact that they were not honoured as Augustas then featured on coins, as there is the notion that childbirth was linked to the award of the

¹²⁸ Brubaker and Tobler 2000: 576–577. Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.47.2, remarks on Helena being titled Augusta and featuring on gold coins.

¹²⁹ *RIC* 7: 26–27, 570, *pl.* 18 no. 15. See also Pohlsander 1993: 163–165.

¹³⁰ Brubaker and Tobler 2000: 578.

title and depiction on coins, though Liz James has challenged this.¹³¹ Certainly Diocletian's daughter Galeria Valeria was both titled Augusta (c. 308) and depicted on coinage as such, even though she did not have any children with her husband Galerius, although she adopted his illegitimate son; her status as the only child of Diocletian and the wife of Galerius might have accounted for her privileged position.¹³² In the matter of his sisters, presumably Constantius II was keen to keep Gallus and Julian in their places as Caesars; to recognise Constantina and Helena as Augustae or to sanction coinage featuring them might have risked enhancing the status of their husbands and giving them ideas above their station. If Constantina was said to be an Augusta in 350 this was when she was unmarried, and presumably for a short duration; it seems unlikely that Constantius would have tolerated his sister to be Augusta when his own wife was not. In addition to the specific circumstances of 350 at the time of the usurpation of Magnentius, it is likely that Constantina was the senior imperial female at this time, Constantius II's first wife probably being dead by this point. This may have enhanced Constantina's status at this moment, or at least have helped to justify her role in events. As far as is known, she did not have any children by this time, though she was to have a daughter by Gallus not long afterwards.

There were other ways women could be celebrated and used to dynastic effect.

As noted in relation to Eusebia, Constantius II renamed the Pontic diocese "Pietas" to honour her, seemingly when she was still alive; the honour also recalls coin legends, as well as being the Latin equivalent of her Greek name.¹³³ Cities could also be named in honour of women. Not much later Julian was to name a city in Bithynia Basilinopolis after his deceased mother, who was Bithynian.¹³⁴ Famously Drepanum, also in

¹³¹ James 2001: 102–104.

¹³² See also the remarks of Hekster 2015: 295–296. He notes that the promotion of Galeria Valeria in this way came at a time when dynastic ideology was reasserting itself after the non-dynastic ideology associated with Diocletian's Tetrarchy, which had led to "the exclusion of imperial women from central imagery". In this context it would have suited Galerius to promote his wife as Augusta and on coinage in order to boost his own status.

¹³³ Amm. Marc. 17.7.6.

¹³⁴ *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II 1.418. See, for example, Mango 1994; Lenski 2016: 153.

Bithynia, was named Helenopolis after Constantine's mother.¹³⁵ It is often assumed to have been named by Constantine; Socrates asserts this, though Philostorgius relates that Helena renamed Drepanum herself, out of reverence for the martyr Lucian who was buried there.¹³⁶ It seems there was a Helenopolis in Palestine too.¹³⁷ Also in Palestine, Maiuma was renamed Constantia after Constantine's half-sister.¹³⁸ As Barnes has noted, the renaming of Drepanum and Maiuma did not necessarily happen after the women had died.¹³⁹ Another of Constantine's half-sisters, Anastasia, seems to have had baths named after her in Constantinople, which might suggest that she lived in the city at some point.¹⁴⁰ (It is interesting to remember that the bronze coinage produced for her sister Constantia was minted in Constantinople, and that Julian himself was born in that city; perhaps there was a concentration of descendants of Theodora living in Constantinople.) There were also Tetrarchic precedents for naming places after women. Galerius named his base in Dacia Ripensis Romuliana (Gamzigrad) after his mother Romula, and he renamed a province in Pannonia Valeria after his wife, Diocletian's daughter.¹⁴¹ In the case of Valeria the honour was bestowed while she was still alive as she outlived her husband; it seems Romula died before Galerius *c.* 303, being buried in Mausoleum I at Romuliana, but the city could have been named after her while she was still alive.¹⁴² Of course, the honouring of royal and imperial women in such ways had a much longer history; one just has to think of the Hellenistic world, for instance, for umpteen cases to come to mind.¹⁴³

Finally, while not relating to honours specifically, it is useful nonetheless to mention how imperial women were used to enhance and support the

¹³⁵ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.61.1, Amm. Marc. 26.8.1. See also Drijvers 1992: 9–11, 2011: 129–130; Mango 1994: 146–147; Lenski 2016: 161–162. Mango 1994: 150 suggests that Constantine founded Helenopolis “with a view to improving the network of communications leading to the new capital [Constantinople]”.

¹³⁶ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.17. Philostorgius 2.12–13.

¹³⁷ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.2.5. Lenski 2016: 159–161.

¹³⁸ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.38. Lenski 2016: 131–135.

¹³⁹ Barnes 2011: 37–38.

¹⁴⁰ Amm. Marc. 26.6.14. *PLRE* 1: 58 (Anastasia 1). For Anastasia see also Chausson 2002. She had been married to Bassianus who Constantine executed in 316: *Anonymous Valesianus* 5.14–15.

¹⁴¹ Romuliana: Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 9.1–2. *PLRE* 1: 770 (Romula). Valeria: Amm. Marc. 19.11.4, Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 40.10. *PLRE* 1: 937 (Galeria Valeria).

¹⁴² See Johnson 2009: 81–82.

¹⁴³ See also Lenski 2016: 159.

status of a would-be emperor in the case of the usurper Procopius in AD 365: he appropriated and paraded Constantius' widow Faustina and her daughter Constantia to demonstrate his Constantinian claim to power.¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Responding to depictions of the regime of Constantius II by contemporaries of the emperor this chapter has explored the roles of both eunuchs and imperial women in the age of the sons of Constantine, setting it within the wider context of the reign of their father. Many of the texts utilised the figures of eunuchs and women to comment negatively on the nature of government under Constantius II, with women and castrated foreign slaves seen as inappropriate figures to have influence in the decision making of the emperor; women and eunuchs fit well together as they both relate to concerns about gender and power. Thus, there exist stories, for instance, about the significant positions of the empress Eusebia and the eunuch Eusebius within the reign of Constantius II. Such stories can be loaded and limited. A lack of good information can prevent the achieving of a more rounded sense of the lives and roles of women and eunuchs in the period, though it should be observed that exactly the same problem applies to the lives and roles of (other) men too.

Despite this lack of information we should still ask questions about the lives and roles of women and eunuchs, even if answers cannot be supplied. For instance, what was Helena the daughter of Constantine the Great doing between 337 and 355, from the death of her father to her marriage to Julian? What did Eutherius the Grand Chamberlain of Constans do after the killing of the emperor in 350? Did he enter the service of Constantina? Was he reclaimed by Constantius II when the emperor came west to deal with Magnentius? What did he do before serving the Caesar Julian? Had Gorgonius been one of Constantius II's eunuchs before being assigned to the Caesar Gallus as his Grand Chamberlain? What was the relationship of Gorgonius with Gallus' wife Constantina? Where was

¹⁴⁴ *Amm. Marc.* 26.7.10, 27.9.3. Procopius had also tried to gain the support of the old general Arbitio, though Valens secured it: *Amm. Marc.* 26.9.4–5, 26.8.13. Some MSS read “general of Constantius” (26.9.4), not “general of Constantine”. Arbitio did have a strong association with Constantius; he was consul in 355, and was a judge at the trials at Chalcedon: *PLRE* 1: 94–95 (Flavius Arbitio 2). His age, however, may have lent him distinction and association with Constantine.

Constantina in 350? Had she already left Rome by the time agents of Magnentius killed her aunt Eutropia and cousin Nepotianus there? For contemporaries, answers to these questions might have been easier; Ammianus certainly seems to expect his readers to know more about Eusebia than he reports. It is very important to appreciate that there are things we do not and cannot know, but that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. This is particularly relevant to the question of the position and power of imperial women. For instance, it could be asked if Theodora played any part in the revival and flourishing of her branch of the Constantinian family tree late in the reign of Constantine the Great. Is it possible that Theodora was in fact a significant political figure even if next to nothing is reported about her? Although Harries does not think much about Theodora, she can pose other useful questions, such as whether Constantina had a child by Hannibalianus.

Faced by loaded and limited information about eunuchs and especially women, then, we should persist in asking questions. Further, however, the fact that we have stories about them at all is significant. Evidently eunuchs and women were visible figures, and were worthy of comment. In addition, it is not just a case of depending on stories told by men; other evidence can come into play, such as titles and honours, reflected, for instance, in the case of women by coins and monuments. Men may have been exploiting imperial women for their own ends, in reality and in stories, but this surely reflects the fact that women were seen as important. Such utilisation may have contributed to the idea that imperial women did have power, and may even have created the opportunity for the exercise of power. While James observes that male authors are using women as a means to a narrative end, arguing for the limitations of the evidence for information about the reality of the lives of imperial women, it can nevertheless be asserted that the stories themselves are revealing. There clearly was a perception that women were prominent and active in politics. Why bother saying anything about them otherwise?

This brings us back to where we started, with the quotation from Ammianus Marcellinus remarking on the influence of eunuchs and wives during the reign of Constantius II. In the case of eunuchs, it is easier to see why this viewpoint existed, and even to argue that it has some basis in reality. This suggests that the viewpoint about the wives needs to be taken more seriously too. While Ammianus identifies wives specifically—and Eusebia is clearly the prime figure here—other authors, such as Mamertinus, point to the influence of women in general. Certainly the Constantinian

women present a very striking group, made up of visible and significant grandmothers, mothers, aunts, daughters, sisters and cousins, as well as wives. Taken as a collective they do not suggest that the fortunes of Constantinian imperial women marked a low point between the Severan and Theodosian empresses. Although for the period from 337 to 361 specifically they may not have been Augustas (though possibly Constantina was) and may not have been depicted on coins (apart from the brief appearance of the grandmothers Helena and Theodora, the former definitely deceased) it can be argued that they are still significant actors. Such a conclusion also has ramifications for how we understand Julian. Famously Julian chose not to remarry after the death of Helena. Equally famous is Julian's apparent rejection of the use of court eunuchs, which is usually understood as a critical comment on the nature of the Constantinian regime. Perhaps, then, his distancing himself from women should be understood in a similar light: not just as an expression of the personal tastes of a "puritanical pagan" but as a comment on the perception of the power of women within the Constantinian dynasty.

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PART III

Administration and Governance



The Dynamics of Imperial Government: Collegiality and Regionalism

Caillan Davenport

INTRODUCTION

In the years 337–361, the Roman empire was ruled in turn by several different imperial colleges, composed either of three Augusti (337–340), two Augusti (340–350), or one Augustus and a Caesar (351–354 and 355–360), not to mention the periods in which multiple Augusti claimed authority (350–353, 360–361).¹ Imperial colleges composed of perpetually mobile Augusti and Caesars had been the accepted model of Roman imperial rule at least since the late third century. This was the result of the expectation that emperors should be present to defend the empire in

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C. Davenport (✉)
Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia
Abteilung für Alte Geschichte, Historisches Seminar, Goethe-Universität,
Frankfurt am Main, Germany
e-mail: caillan.davenport@mq.edu.au

person, notably on the volatile Rhine, Danube, or Euphrates frontiers. The needs of constant campaigning resulted in emperors and their courts setting up residence at regional “imperial cities”, such as Trier, Milan, Sirmium, and Antioch, rather than residing primarily at Rome itself.² These developments not only meant that the centre of imperial power was now located in the provinces, but also that the centre was constantly changing and on the move. The aim of this chapter is to examine how these two factors—collegiate government, and the relationship between centre and periphery—influenced and shaped the imperial administration in the period 337–361.

EMPERORS, PREFECTS, AND REGIONS

Constantine, who ruled as sole Augustus after the defeat of Licinius, was supported by a flotilla of Caesars drawn from his immediate family. His dynastic plans got off to an abortive start when his eldest son and putative successor, the Caesar Crispus, was tried and executed for treason in 326, when he was aged in his mid-twenties.³ Fortunately, Constantine—unlike most Roman emperors—was blessed with an unusually large number of male relatives who could be promoted into the imperial college. Constantine II, who was less than a year old when he was elevated to Caesar alongside Crispus in 317, was given his own court at Trier in Gaul from 328, when he was still only twelve years old.⁴ His slightly younger brother, Constantius II, was made Caesar aged seven in 324, but it was not until 335 that he was established with his own retinue independent of his father in Antioch.⁵ Constantine’s youngest son, Constans, born in 323, was elevated to the rank of Caesar ten years later in 333, shortly followed by his cousin, Dalmatius, who became Caesar in 335, around the age of twenty.⁶ The precise residences of Constans and Dalmatius are unknown, but they seem to have been based in Italy and Illyricum,

² On these developments, see Millar 1977: 40–53; Kulikowski 2014. For “imperial cities”, see McEvoy’s chapter in this volume.

³ Barnes 2011: 144–147. His precise age is unknown: see Barnes 1982: 44; Kienast 1996: 305–306, for the possibilities.

⁴ Barnes 1982: 44–45, 84; Kienast 1996: 310.

⁵ Barnes 1982: 45, 85; Kienast 1996: 314.

⁶ Barnes 1982: 45; Kienast 1996: 307, 312. For the reasons behind Constantine’s promotion of his nephew Dalmatius, the son of his half-brother Flavius Dalmatius, see Burgess 2008: 7–8; Barnes 2011: 164–165.

respectively.⁷ This dynastic strategy ensured that the heartland of empire and the frontier zones in Gaul, the Balkans, and Syria all had an imperial presence.⁸

Each of Constantine's Caesars was endowed with a court retinue, and more importantly, entrusted with (or entrusted to, depending on one's perspective) their own Praetorian Prefects.⁹ This was something of an innovation on Constantine's part, since prefects had generally only been attached to Augusti, rather than Caesars.¹⁰ But Constantine may have been attempting to establish his three sons and nephew in a Tetrarchic-style administration, so that they would rule as two Augusti and two Caesars after his death.¹¹ The Praetorian Prefects formed a significant part of this plan, since it was vital that all emperors had the appropriate administrative support, not to mention the legitimacy, which came from having a prefect at their side.¹² The youth of the Caesars was undoubtedly also a factor, since teenage boys could not rule without some guidance.¹³ Praetorian Prefects stood at the very top of the civilian and military hierarchy—"the summit of all offices" (*honorum omnium apicem*) in the words of Ammianus—essentially functioning as substitutes for the emperors themselves.¹⁴ As the head of the civilian administration, they communicated and enforced the emperor's orders and policies on judicial, financial, and legal matters to diocesan *vicarii*, provincial governors, and other administrative officials.¹⁵ Although they did not usually command armies, the prefects had responsibility for military affairs, such as supply

⁷Barnes 1982: 84–87, 198.

⁸Blockley 1972: 461.

⁹Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.51.1–52.1 (though Dalmatius is passed over in silence); Lib., *Or.* 59.40, 43 (omitting both Dalmatius and Constantine II).

¹⁰The Caesars of the Tetrarchy did not have their own prefects (Corcoran 2000: 87–89; Porena 2003: 131). The first Caesar to receive a prefect in the fourth century was the ill-fated Crispus (Barnes 1982: 128–129; 2011: 158–159). This decision may not have been entirely unprecedented: Saloninus Caesar, the son of Gallienus, was stationed at Cologne with an official called Silvanus, who was possibly a Praetorian Prefect (Zos. 1.38.2; Zonar. 12.24).

¹¹Burgess 2008: 8–9; Barnes 2011: 165.

¹²Cf. Porena 2003: 571–574, who argues that developed regional prefectures were established under Constantine in the late 320s.

¹³Burgess 2008: 7–8.

¹⁴Amm. Marc. 21.16.2.

¹⁵Jones 1964: 372; Dillon 2012: 36–37, 108–109. Several constitutions from the mid-fourth century deal with this chain of command, such as *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.3 (357), 1.15.4 (362), 7.4.3 (357), 8.5.5 (354), 11.16.7 (356), 16.10.9 (356).

and logistics, as well as supervising the rights and privileges of soldiers and officers. On these matters they frequently liaised with the senior army generals, the *magistri militum*.¹⁶ Provincials were entitled to appeal to the Praetorian Prefects if they were unhappy with the decisions of provincial governors, and all records of cases heard in the governor's courts were later transferred to the praetorian prefecture for examination.¹⁷ Most importantly, the judgements of prefects themselves were not subject to appeal, for “they alone are truly said to judge in the emperor's place” (*solī vice sacra cognoscere vere dicendi sunt*), as Constantine declared.¹⁸ Their influence over all levels of the administration is made strikingly clear by Eunapius' remark that praetorian prefecture “is an imperial office, but without the purple” (ἡ δὲ ἀρχὴ βασιλεία ἐστὶν ἀπόρφυρος).¹⁹

Constantine's dynastic plans collapsed under the weight of familial homicide and fraternal discord. The Caesar Dalmatius and most other male relatives were executed in 337 on the orders of Constantius II.²⁰ There was an uneasy detente between the three brothers who then became Augusti, and in 340, civil war broke out between Constantine II and his brother Constans.²¹ The defeat of Constantine II in battle near Aquileia meant that Constans—still only seventeen years of age—inherited his brother's territory, including Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The result was that Constans now had the vast majority of the empire to govern, including most of North Africa up to Cyrenaica, and all Roman territory in continental Europe except the diocese of Thrace.²² In these circumstances Constans chose to appoint a second Praetorian Prefect, Aconius Catullinus,

¹⁶ See the following laws from the period under discussion: *Cod. Theod.* 1.7.1 (359), 7.1.3 (349), 7.4.2 (355), 7.4.4–6 (361), 7.13.1 (353), 8.1.5 (357), 12.1.38 (346).

¹⁷ There are numerous constitutions on appeals against governor's decisions from the reigns of Constantine and his sons: *Cod. Theod.* 1.5.1 (325), 1.5.2 (327), 1.5.3 (331), 11.34.1 (331), 11.30.27 (357), 11.34.2 (355). For the transfer of records, see *Cod. Theod.* 1.16.3 (318). See Jones 1964: 371–372; Dillon 2012: 108–113.

¹⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 11.30.16 (331). On the evolution of the prefect's judicial responsibilities from the high empire see Eich 2005: 216–257.

¹⁹ Eunap., *VS* 490.

²⁰ Burgess 2008 offers the most thorough recent account.

²¹ For an analysis of the tensions in these very poorly attested years, relying heavily on numismatic evidence, see Bruun 1987; Maraval 2013: 39–44. See the chapter by Lewis in this volume for a critical reappraisal of the conflict.

²² Our ability to reconstruct the administrative changes which followed this depends above all on the work of Barnes 1987, 1992, 1993 on which I rely heavily throughout.

to be based primarily in his brother's former territories.²³ Catullinus is first attested in office in June 341, but he was probably appointed soon after Constantine II's demise, replacing the previous prefect, the father of Ambrose of Milan, who had presumably died in the civil war.²⁴ Appointing a second Praetorian Prefect would go some way to ensuring the continuity of imperial presence in Trier and throughout the Gallic region.²⁵ The region of Gaul had been accustomed to hosting emperors on a regular basis since the late third century, with Trier becoming a major imperial centre around which members of the Gallic aristocracy congregated.²⁶ As the author of the *Expositio totius mundi* wrote, Gaul "always needs an emperor" (*imperatorem semper eget*).²⁷ Constans, despite his reputation as vigorous military commander, could not be everywhere at once. He was also unmarried and had no children, so he was not in a position to appoint a Caesar from within his family.²⁸ He is not attested as visiting Gaul immediately after his brother's demise, and was probably occupied with the northern Danubian frontier in early 341.²⁹ He first travelled to Gaul later that year for a campaign against the Franci, who were defeated in 342, before embarking on a swift expedition to Britain in early 343.³⁰ The combination of a Praetorian Prefect based in Gaul, and later Constans' personal campaigning presence in the region, helped to ensure that his brother's former territory would remain loyal.

The creation of a prefecture in Gaul meant that Constans' existing prefect, Antonius Marcellinus (in office from 340 to 342), effectively had

²³ Barnes 1987: 17; 1992: 251–252; *PLRE* 1: 187–188 (Aco Catullinus 3).

²⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 8.2.1, 12.1.31. For the identification of Ambrose's father with Constantine II's Praetorian Prefect, see Barnes 1992: 251, 253.

²⁵ Szidat 2014: 124.

²⁶ Section II of the *Chronograph of 354* features the tyche of four cities: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Trier, highlighting the Gallic city's importance.

²⁷ *Expositio* 58. Barnes 1989: 304 n. 7 dates this work to the late 340s. On usurpations occurring in Gaul, see Szidat 2014: 121–122.

²⁸ He had been betrothed to the daughter of Constantine's Praetorian Prefect Flavius Ablabius, though this relationship was presumably dissolved when Ablabius was murdered in 337 (Barnes 2011: 171–172).

²⁹ See Harries 2012: 190, and Maraval 2013: 46–50, on Constans' activity. A Danubian campaign is suggested by *Cod. Theod.* 8.2.1, 12.1.31, issued on 24 June 341 from Lauriacum in Noricum (Maraval 2013: 46).

³⁰ Barnes 1993: 224–225, collects the evidence. This journey to Britain seems to have been prompted by problems on the northern frontier (Birley 2005: 414–416, cf. the more sceptical Hunt 1998: 6–7).

his jurisdiction limited to Italy, Africa, and Illyricum.³¹ But this was still a significant purview. On an inscribed statue base from Gortyna in Crete, Marcellinus was described as “the great ruler of all the western lands” (Ἐσπερίης πάση[ς] χθονός[ς] | ὄβριμον ἰθουτῆ[ρα]).³² Although this is a poetic description, it does actually reflect Marcellinus’ power and authority as Praetorian Prefect, which extended all the way to Crete in the diocese of Illyricum. In 343, Constans appointed a third prefect specifically for Illyricum, sending Anatolius Azutrio from his court in Trier to take up office at Sirmium.³³ This new appointment was probably prompted by a Gothic threat on the Danube, a problem that subsequently motivated Constans’ own journey there in the autumn of 344.³⁴ The creation of the Illyrican prefecture meant that Constans’ remaining prefect (formerly *praesentalis*) had his authority limited to Italy and Africa.³⁵ This prefect was a particularly important representative, since Constans himself rarely ventured south of Milan or Aquileia.³⁶ The prefect’s conduct and relationship with both the Senate and the *civitates* of Italy reflected on the absent emperor. It was thus fitting that Vulcacius Rufinus, prefect between 344 and 347, was honoured by the people of Ravenna with a statue in his house in Rome. The inscription on the statue base praised him as “a man who has achieved the heights of all offices with his favourable regulation of justice” (*cunc|tarumq(ue) dignitatum fastigia fabo|rabili moderatione iustitiae super|gresso*).³⁷

Between 347 and 350, Constans exceptionally combined the prefecture of Italy and Africa with the urban prefecture of the city of Rome.³⁸ This was probably an attempt to consolidate the imperial presence within the

³¹ Barnes 1987: 21.

³² *I. Cret.* 323 = *LSA* 785 (F. Bigi, I. Tantillo, U. Gehn).

³³ Eunap., *VS* 490, 492; Vogler 1979: 117–118; Barnes 1992: 258. Following Norman 1957, Barnes 1992, and Bradbury 2000, I distinguish between Anatolius Azutrio (Prefect of Illyricum under Constans), and Anatolius (Prefect of Illyricum under Constantius II), who are conflated in *PLRE* 1: 59–60 (Anatolius 3).

³⁴ Thompson 1956; Norman 1957.

³⁵ This occurred during the term of Furius Placidus (*PLRE* 1: 705–706 (Placidus 2); Barnes 1987: 21; 1992: 257). There was probably not a separate prefecture of Africa, as has been suggested (cf. Vogler 1979: 123–130).

³⁶ The exception is in 346, when he is found at Caesena, just south of Ravenna, on 23 May (*Cod. Theod.* 12.1.38, with Barnes 1993: 225, 316 n. 52, on the date).

³⁷ *PLRE* 1: 782–783 (Vulcacius Rufinus 25); *CIL* VI 32051.

³⁸ Vogler 1979: 113–114; Barnes 1992: 258.

sacra urbs itself.³⁹ Ulpian Limenius, one of these joint prefects, received a constitution from Constans regarding the safeguarding of monuments and tombs.⁴⁰ The imperial missive instructed Limenius to inform the provincial governors in his region of the necessity of inspecting public monuments, while in Rome itself Limenius was to carry out this duty himself in company with the *pontifices*. The image of the Praetorian Prefect, dressed in his official uniform with his sword, walking through Rome and inspecting monuments, would have been a vivid reminder of the long reach of imperial authority.⁴¹ In many ways, the emperor's personal absence from the city of Rome was calculated and deliberate. It was much more important for Constans to command the armies in person than sit in the *curia*. Senators would travel to the emperor's court in Gaul or Pannonia to hold office as a *comes* (imperial companion), or occupy administrative positions such as the praetorian prefecture.⁴² They craved and needed imperial favour, and the emperor did not have to be in Rome to bestow it.⁴³ The presence of the Praetorian Prefect of Italy was regarded as a sufficient reminder of the emperor's authority.

In contrast to the growing complexity of the administration in Constans' territory, Constantius II retained only one Praetorian Prefect in the years 337–351. During this period, he was occupied with external problems: after ensuring that he had installed a Roman nominee, Arsaces, on the throne of Armenia, he engaged in active warfare with Persia.⁴⁴ However, the extent of his territory was much smaller than his brother Constans, so there was no pressing reason for an additional prefect. Indeed, between 344 and 351, the position of Praetorian Prefect was held continuously by one man, Flavius Philippus.⁴⁵ This extended tenure seems to have been the result of a genuinely effective working relationship between Constantius

³⁹ Harries 2012: 190 has suggested this appointment was the result of a souring of the relationship between the emperor and the senatorial aristocracy, but not all scholars would interpret it in this way (see Callu 1992: 57; Maraval 2013: 50). The issue is examined fully by Moser 2017.

⁴⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.2 (349).

⁴¹ For the uniform of the Praetorian Prefect, see Kelly 2004: 20–21. Constantius II's Praetorian Prefect Flavius Philippus was commemorated with a statue in Chalcedon showing him wearing a sword (Lydus, *Mag.* 2.9).

⁴² This is discussed in further detail in the final section of this chapter, "Courts and Careers".

⁴³ See Humphries 2003 for an examination of the dynamics of this relationship.

⁴⁴ Julian., *Or.* 1.18c–d, 20c–22a; Hunt 1998: 12–13; Maraval 2013: 64–71.

⁴⁵ *PLRE* 1: 697 (Philippus 7); Barnes 1992: 254–255.

II and his prefect. After Philippus' death at the hands of Magnentius in 351, the emperor praised him in extravagant terms, lauding his loyalty and sense of justice.⁴⁶ Philippus only gained a colleague in 351, when Constantius II made his twenty-six-year-old cousin Gallus a Caesar and appointed Thalassius as his prefect. Thalassius was a long-time *comes* of the emperor, and was installed at Gallus' court in Antioch with the clear remit of supervising the young man and delivering reports to the Augustus.⁴⁷ This decision mirrored Constantine's establishment of courts and prefects for his sons, but had more sinister overtones, perhaps because Gallus' powers as Caesar were deliberately designed to be limited.⁴⁸ Further changes were soon to come. The defeat and suicide of Magnentius in mid-353 meant that the entire empire came under the control of Constantius II, who retained the system of regional prefectures that his brother had developed.⁴⁹ This was extended further in 354, when Constantius II decided to retain a Praetorian Prefect in the East after Gallus' downfall: the official now became the Prefect of Oriens.⁵⁰ When Julian was elevated to the position of Caesar in 355 and was given Gaul as his remit, there was no need to assign a separate Praetorian Prefect to his court, since there was already a prefect there to oversee the civilian administration (not to mention Julian himself).⁵¹ By the end of the 350s, it was accepted that all Praetorian Prefects had specific geographical jurisdictions,

⁴⁶ *AE* 1967, 47 = *I. Eph.* 41. See Swift and Oliver 1962 for a text, translation, and commentary.

⁴⁷ *PLRE* 1: 886 (Thalassius 1); Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.26a; *Amm. Marc.* 14.1.10. Blockley 1972: 441–445, 464–468, argues that Gallus' powers were strictly military, and that he had no formal authority over civilian affairs, which would necessitate the appointment of a prefect to handle such matters.

⁴⁸ Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.26a, 3.28 shows that Constantius II selected all the officials at Gallus' court, and the Caesar had no powers to make appointments himself. See the discussions of Blockley 1972: 465–466; Vogler 1979: 84–93.

⁴⁹ Barnes 1987: 22. We know of one empire-wide edict issued to all prefects in 354 (*Cod. Theod.* 6.27.1, 7.13.1, 7.21.2, 8.4.5, 8.7.4, 8.7.5, 8.7.6, 12.1.14, 12.1.18). For the date, see Matthews 2000: 232–236. Cf. Seock 1919: 42–43, who dated it to the reign of Constantine. Other examples of collective addresses to all prefects in the *Cod. Theod.* are cited by Seock 1919: 6.

⁵⁰ Barnes 1992: 259; *Amm. Marc.* 15.13.1.

⁵¹ Julian's appointment in Gaul: *Amm. Marc.* 15.8.1–14; *Zos.* 3.2.1–3. Blockley 1972: 444–445 argues that Julian, like Gallus, had no formal powers over the civilian administration assigned to him by Constantius II, but assumed such responsibilities gradually. The first prefect during Julian's time as Caesar was Honoratus, who had previously been *comes Orientis* under Gallus (*PLRE* 1: 438–439 (Honoratus 2)).

though the precise extent of each regional prefecture was subject to change in subsequent decades.⁵² This system had been created, not through any systematic planning on the part of the emperors, but as a series of *ad hoc* responses to changing political circumstances with the aim of ensuring imperial representation in different regions of the empire. In the case of Constans, the regional prefectures were a way of managing his vast territories, while for Constantius II, they were also a way of managing his Caesars.⁵³

Like the emperors themselves, Praetorian Prefects were active officials who toured the territories under their rule. Praetorian Prefects attached to the emperor (known as *praesentales*) did not always remain at their commander's side, but embarked on independent journeys, as we can see from the movements of the long-serving Flavius Philippus in the East. In 344, when Constantius II was at Antioch, he wrote to Philippus ordering him to travel to Constantinople to expel the bishop Paul.⁵⁴ Several years later in 348, Philippus is attested on a tour of Asia Minor, progressing through Bithynia, when Constantius II was campaigning against the Persians.⁵⁵ Nor did the creation of regional prefectures reduce the prefects to stationary figures, permanently based at cities such as Trier, Sirmium, or Antioch. Indeed, much like *praesentales*, they often accompanied an Augustus or Caesar when the emperors were in their own region, as the evidence from Gaul makes clear.⁵⁶ For example, in the winter of 353/354, Constantius II was resident at Arles.⁵⁷ The Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, Vulcaci

⁵² Flavius Taurus: "praetorian prefect throughout Italy and Africa" (*praef(ecto) prae(or)io per Italiam atq(ue) | Africam*), a title which accurately reflects his authority in 355–361, even though the text was inscribed much later (*CIL* 6 41336). For subsequent variations in the prefectures in the later fourth century, see Errington 2006: 81–84.

⁵³ Constantius II was notoriously controlling, expecting his Caesars to obey his commands (*Amm. Marc.* 14.11.10). He made rulings on Julian's behalf that were expected to apply to the Caesar's court as well as his own (*Cod. Theod.* 9.16.6, on *magi* in the *comitatus*). On one level this was standard procedure, as shown by the conduct of government in the Tetrarchic period, when rulings of the Augusti were expected to apply throughout the empire. On the other hand, some Tetrarchic Caesars did have limited legislative competence, and we should not automatically assume that all collegiate governments operated in the same way (Corcoran 2000: 266–275).

⁵⁴ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16.

⁵⁵ Philippus: *Lib., Or.* 1.69–70. Constantius II: Barnes 1993: 220; *Lib., Or.* 1.66 (which specifically mentions the Persian campaign of 348).

⁵⁶ Szidat 2014: 124.

⁵⁷ *Amm. Marc.* 14.5.1, 10.1; Barnes 1993: 221.

Rufinus, was in attendance on the emperor at least part of the time, since on 8 March 354 Rufinus received a constitution on coinage at Arles.⁵⁸ In the Spring of 354, Constantius II moved northwards to combat the Alamanni, but the imperial retinue came to rest at Valentia when the rains delayed the supply lines. The troops, stationed to the north at Cabyllona, grew restless, and Rufinus was sent ahead to quell their anxieties.⁵⁹ Likewise, Flavius Florentius, Praetorian Prefect of Gaul when Julian was Caesar, could often be found at Julian's side during his campaigns against the Alamanni, or performing logistical duties in support of the Caesar's military endeavours.⁶⁰ The regional Praetorian Prefects also toured their territories independently, functioning as imperial representatives in the emperor's absence. The travels of Flavius Taurus, Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Africa from 355 to 361, can be partially reconstructed from the *Codex Theodosianus*. If the dates and places indicating where the laws were given (*data*) by the emperor and accepted (*accepta*) by the prefect are correct, then Taurus travelled back and forth between Carthage and Rome between November 356 and July 357.⁶¹ On 24 September 357, Constantius II and Taurus were both in the same location, since *Cod. Theod.* 9.42.4 was given and received on that day.⁶² Since Constantius II is attested in Sirmium in October 357, Taurus probably accompanied the emperor on part of his journey into Illyricum, but then returned to his own prefecture. A later constitution from 358 took an exceptionally long time to reach Taurus: although dispatched from Sirmium on 4 January

⁵⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 9.23.1. The manuscripts give the date 356, when Rufinus was no longer prefect. I follow *PLRE* 1: 782–783 (Rufinus 25), in dating it to 354. Seeck 1919: 45–46, prefers 346, when Rufinus was Prefect of Italy. The place of acceptance is given in the manuscript as Constantina, which Seeck assumed was the city in Africa. But Arles was known officially as Constantina from 328 to 340, then Constantia from 353 onwards (Burgess 1999: 278–279). This indicates that the Gallic city was the place where Rufinus accepted the law.

⁵⁹ *Amm. Marc.* 14.10.1–5.

⁶⁰ *PLRE* 1: 362 (Florentius 1); *Amm. Marc.* 16.12.14, 18.2.4, 7.

⁶¹ *Cod. Theod.* 11.7.8 (given by Constantius II at Dinumma on 2 September 356; received by Taurus at Carthage on 12 November 356); *Cod. Theod.* 13.1.1 (given by Constantius II on 2 December 356, received by Taurus at Rome on 6 February 357); *Cod. Theod.* 13.1.2 (received by Taurus at Carthage on 10 July 357). Taurus may have been at Rome in February 357 preparing for the emperor's visit in April/May of that year.

⁶² Matthews 2000: 182 cites this and other instances of the phenomenon for evidence of emperors and prefects being in the same place.

358, the prefect did not receive it until 27 August.⁶³ This is not an isolated example of a delayed arrival (the record is 349 days), and the phenomenon is conventionally attributed to the fact that the official concerned was not where he was expected to be.⁶⁴ It is evident, therefore, that prefects were peripatetic officials, with their movements designed to ensure that imperial authority was visible throughout the provinces.

The arrival of a new prefect was a memorable occasion, reminiscent of an imperial *adventus*.⁶⁵ Eunapius evocatively described the first visit to Greece of Anatolius Azutrio, Prefect of Illyricum, as “more oppressive than the famous and well-remembered Persian expedition” (βαρύτερος ἦν τῆς Περσικῆς ἐκείνης καὶ πολυμνήτου στρατιᾶς).⁶⁶ This was a moment of awe for not only the provincials but also lesser imperial officials. Libanius records that when the prefect Flavius Philippus was on tour in Bithynia, the *vicarius Ponticae* Flavius Philagrius “had to rush at once and receive his solemn master on his progress” (δεῖν ἤδη θεῖν καὶ δέχεσθαι τοῖς ὄροις τὴν βλοσυρὰν ἀρχήν).⁶⁷ The prefects’ visits reminded these subordinate officials of their authority as vice gerent of the emperor. There was a certainly a performative aspect to these prefectural visits, not only in the *adventus* ceremony itself, but also in associated rituals such as the delivering of panegyrics. When Philippus was passing through Nicomedia in 344, he ordered the young Libanius to declaim a panegyric on the brothers Constantius II and Constans in front of assembled local dignitaries.⁶⁸ The speech praised the perpetual activity of the emperors, comparing them to athletes running up and down a stadium, reminding the local audience that their absent rulers were always working actively for their protection.⁶⁹ Prefects also ensured that their own qualities and achievements were promulgated to the provincials. Strategius Musonianus, Prefect of Oriens in 354–358, demanded a panegyric from Libanius, and then had it copied and sent round the cities in his prefecture.⁷⁰ The evidence therefore

⁶³ *Cod. Theod.* 9.42.4.

⁶⁴ Jones 1964: 401–403, 1161–1163; Matthews 2000: 184.

⁶⁵ On the ceremonies for imperial representatives in the provinces, see McCormick 1986: 252–258.

⁶⁶ Eun., *VS* 491.

⁶⁷ *PLRE* 1: 694 (Philagrius 5); Lib., *Or.* 1.69.

⁶⁸ Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 153–154, 158, 161–162. On this panegyric see also the chapter by Christine Greenlee in this volume.

⁶⁹ Lib., *Or.* 59.75, 147–148.

⁷⁰ Lib., *Or.* 1.111–113. On the politics of such commissions, see Criboire 2013: 80–82.

suggests that even regional prefects were dynamic and mobile officials. They could either tour their territory on the emperor's behalf, serving as a proxy for imperial authority, or join the *comitatus* itself if the emperor was personally present in the region.

There were, of course, limits and drawbacks to this new government apparatus. Prefects, just like emperors, could not actually be everywhere at once. The Praetorian Prefects of Gaul are mainly found in the Gallic provinces themselves, where the local aristocracy had become accustomed to easy access to the emperors. But the prefecture of Gaul also included Spain, Britain, and Mauretania Tingitana, areas that do not seem to have been visited by the prefects regularly, if at all, though this could be the result of deficiencies in our evidence. Judging from the itinerary of Flavius Taurus, the Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Africa travelled throughout the Italian peninsula and to Carthage, but no further into the African heartland to regions such as Numidia. The itineraries of Flavius Philippus in the east likewise seems to have been focused on major centres on the main highway from Constantinople through Asia Minor to Antioch. The visibility of senior imperial officials was clearly carefully calculated. Variations from the major routes did occur, but not always for pressing administrative or logistical reasons. Anatolius Azutrio's journey to Athens was motivated by a desire to commune with the sophists in Greece.⁷¹ The other, more significant limitation is that prefects, despite being imperial representatives, were a poor substitute for an emperor as far as the army was concerned. In 355 the region of Gaul, despite having its own prefect, was said to be suffering from "extended neglect" (*diuturna incuria*) in the words of Ammianus: in response, Constantius II sent Silvanus, *magister peditum*, to manage the army, though this ended in his ill-starred usurpation.⁷² After such a disastrous outcome, the emperor could see no alternative but to appoint his cousin Julian as Caesar, a man whom the troops would recognise as a member of the emperor's family.⁷³ Although Praetorian Prefects could deliver justice and administer the provinces, they did not serve as a focus of military loyalty like an emperor. Collegiate governments composed of Augusti and Caesars were a political necessity.

⁷¹ Eunap., *VS.* 490–491.

⁷² *PLRE* 1: 840–841 (Silvanus 2); Amm. Marc. 15.5.2.

⁷³ Amm. Marc. 15.8.1; Blockley 1972: 446–447.

THE UNITY OF GOVERNMENT

The most significant ideological message promoted by Constantine's sons was that of unity. All three (later two) sons composed a cohesive imperial college, and edicts and letters were issued in the names of all its members. Libanius spoke of teams of horses riding across the empire transmitting letters of Constans and Constantius II to each other.⁷⁴ The Praetorian Prefects of all the emperors likewise formed their own united college. From the Tetrarchic period onwards, the prefects made communal dedications of imperial statues in different regions throughout the empire, even though only one prefect would have been present to oversee these monuments.⁷⁵ In early 336, the college of five prefects under Constantine ostensibly collaborated in erecting statues of Constantine II at Tubernuc in Africa and Antioch in Syria.⁷⁶ This practice continued under Constantine's sons. In late 341 or early 342, the prefects Antonius Marcellinus, Domitius Leontius and Fabius Titianus are named dedicating statues of Constans and Constantius II at Augusta Traiana in Thrace. The wording of the inscription suggests the initiative may have actually come from Palladius, governor of Thrace.⁷⁷ Letters of one prefect were also issued in the names of all members of the college.⁷⁸ This was in keeping with the practice of the high empire, when the emperor's two Praetorian Prefects would answer letters together, as shown by an example from the reign of Marcus Aurelius.⁷⁹ The difference in the fourth century was that the prefects were resident in different regions across the empire, and—in practice, if not in theory—were responsible to different Augusti. We possess a fragmentary record of two letters sent by the college of prefects as it stood in late 342 (Domitius Leontius, Fabius Titianus, and Furius

⁷⁴ Lib., *Or.* 59.152.

⁷⁵ Feissel 1991: 439–441; Porena 2003: 150–152, 496. Cf. Vogler 1979: 130–132, who suggests all prefects met to make the dedications.

⁷⁶ *ILTun.* 814; *AE* 1985, 823. These statues were probably dedicated on 1 March 336, when Constantine II celebrated his *vicennalia* (Feissel 1985: 434; Salway 2007: 1283–1284). Cf. Barnes 2011: 162, who prefers the summer of 335, prior to Dalmatius' elevation to Caesar on 18 September.

⁷⁷ *CIL* 3 12330 = *ILS* 8944 = *LSA* 1112 (U. Gehr). Only one statue base for Constans survives, but the inscription suggests that there were originally statues of both Augusti, as Gehr notes.

⁷⁸ Jones 1964: 325–326, 1131–1132; Feissel 1991.

⁷⁹ This is the correspondence of Marcus' Praetorian Prefects Bassaeus Rufus and Macrinus Vindex, who wrote to the magistrates of Saepinum (*CIL* 9 2438; Eich 2005: 224–228).

Placidus). The letters were addressed to the former *comes* Flavius Felicianus, and concerned his right to remain unmolested as priest of Apollo at Delphi, where the letters were subsequently inscribed in the public archives.⁸⁰ It is probable that Felicianus approached Fabius Titianus, with whom he had shared the consulship in 337, regarding the problems he was facing.⁸¹ The reply emphatically supported his rights, and was endorsed by all three prefects, as was customary. These letters and inscribed dedications represented the public face of the administration of Constantine's sons as a government united by consensus.

In practice, the collegiality of government depended on the unity of the Augusti themselves. Even before the conference of September 337, Constantine II had taken action that impinged on the authority of his brothers. He gave all exiled bishops permission to return to their sees, including Athanasius, the deposed bishop of Alexandria, despite the fact that Egypt was in Constantius II's territory.⁸² This was an act designed to emphasise his seniority within the imperial college. The confusion is also manifest in imperial letters to Africa, which lay within Constans' territory. On 8 January 339 a letter to the proconsul of Africa, Aurelius Celsinus, was issued from Trier, Constantine II's residence, on the subject of the declining numbers in the local Carthaginian council.⁸³ Was this an aggressive move on Constantine II's part, as he sought to interfere in Constans' affairs? It is more likely to be the case of administrative confusion. The letter is not an edict, but reply to an inquiry by Celsinus, as is made clear by the emperor's statement "you have complained" (*conquestus es*).⁸⁴ Perhaps the proconsul had already tried to approach Constans and had no reply, or he sent letters to all three brothers, or he may have viewed Constantine II as the most suitable recipient as senior emperor.⁸⁵ It was certainly not unknown for petitioners to approach multiple emperors

⁸⁰ The inscription featuring the letters has not yet been published, but it is translated into English in Athanassiadi 1989/1990: 276, and Barnes 2011: 143, based on a transcription by Vatín 1962 (*non vidi*).

⁸¹ Athanassiadi 1989/1990: 276–277.

⁸² Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* 8.1–2; Barnes 1993: 34–35; Hunt 1998: 5; Harries 2012: 189.

⁸³ *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.27. For the argument that it was written by Constantine II, see Seock 1919: 48; Barnes 1993: 218, 311 n. 5; Hunt 1998: 5. Cf. Maraval 2013: 42, who is more sceptical.

⁸⁴ On laws in the *Cod. Theod.* as letters to officials, see Matthews 2000: 13–16, 67–69; Dillon 2012: 157–158.

⁸⁵ Maraval 2013: 40–41 notes that Constantine II did not exercise formal authority in his brother's territory. Cf. Lewis in this volume.

in order to obtain the result they desired. In 338–339, Athanasius wrote to both Constantine II and Constans regarding his restoration to his bishopric in Alexandria, which lay in their brother's territory.⁸⁶ The case of Athanasius continued to be a source of tension throughout the 340s, as Constans enthusiastically championed Athanasius' cause, despite the fact that the see of Alexandria was in Constantius II's sphere. In 343, the Council of Serdica met to consider the issue, and the choice of location, on the border between the two emperor's territories, could not have been more pointed.⁸⁷ When Athanasius was still not restored to Alexandria by mid-345, Constans threatened his brother in a series of hostile letters, which forced Constantius II to withdraw his opposition.⁸⁸ Several years later in 351, the Council of Sirmium charged Athanasius with treason on the grounds that he had stirred up enmity between the emperors.⁸⁹ As Harries has pointed out, these incidents underscored the divided nature of imperial authority: no one would have dared to challenge Constantine's religious supremacy in such a manner.⁹⁰

At the same time, however, religious controversies—though they were undoubtedly serious—do not mean that the two emperors were completely estranged throughout the 340s. Salway has demonstrated that in the years 340–344, the two administrations co-operated on the matter of nominations to the ordinary consulship, carefully balancing the need to appoint consuls from among the senatorial aristocracy, as well as leading officials and generals under both Constans and Constantius II.⁹¹ Indeed, as far as consular nominations are concerned, the clear breakdown of communication between the brothers does not occur until 346. In that year, the consuls recognised in Constantius II's territory were the two Augusti themselves, though they were only proclaimed after a substantial delay. In the western areas under Constans' control, there were no official consuls at all.⁹² It is tempting to see this as a reflection of continuing tension over

⁸⁶ Barnes 1993: 39–40, 51–52. On letters between emperors and bishops see also the chapter by Nicholas Baker-Brian in this volume.

⁸⁷ For the meeting, see Barnes 1993: 71–81.

⁸⁸ Barnes 1993: 89–90. For Constans' letters, see Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.5; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.20.1; Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.12.

⁸⁹ Barnes 1993: 63–68.

⁹⁰ Harries 2012: 244–245.

⁹¹ Salway 2008: 300–309, showing that there was no dispute over the consular nominations in 344, as previously thought.

⁹² Bagnall et al. 1987: 226–227; Salway 2008: 305.

Athanasius, but by this time it had been agreed that the bishop would be restored. There may well have been other, completely unrelated, reasons for the discord, which do not feature in the ecclesiastical sources, and are therefore lost to us today.⁹³ It is surely significant that the administrations of both emperors were able to agree on other issues, such as fiscal policy. A new standard for the bronze coinage was introduced empire-wide in 347–348. The three denominations of bronze coins all featured the same legend FEL(IX) TEMP(ORVM) REPARATIO (“the happy restoration of our times”) throughout the empire, though the popularity of some of the individual reverse designs differed between the two Augusti.⁹⁴ This new coinage was a testament to imperial co-operation.

One consequence of the territorial division of the empire in the 340s was that the city of Rome lay in the purview of Constans, rather than Constantius II. This was perhaps less important than it may initially appear. It certainly did not prevent officials who served at the court of Constantius II being nominated to the ordinary consulship, though they would have probably held their inaugural games at Antioch rather than travel to Rome for the occasion.⁹⁵ The *fasti* of Urban Prefects in Rome in the 340s reveals two senators whose careers encompassed service to both emperors, M. Maecius Memmius Furius Baburius Caecilianus Placidus and Ulpianus Limenius: these men certainly did travel to the *sacra urbs*.⁹⁶ Western senatorial aristocrats tended to gravitate to the more accessible court of Constans in the West, rather than travel to Antioch to serve as *comites* to Constantius II, but this is only a general trend, rather than a hard and fast rule.⁹⁷ There was no firm barrier between the brothers that isolated Constantius II’s adherents from Rome. It is generally assumed that it was Constans alone who was responsible for communications with the prefects of Rome, though the evidence is admittedly exiguous.⁹⁸ By the same

⁹³ Salway 2008: 305–306. Cf. Barnes 1993: 91, who associates the consular problems with Athanasius.

⁹⁴ Kent 1967, followed by Hendy 1985: 291–294, 469–470; Abdy 2012: 595–597. See Maraval 2013: 52–58, for an overview of recent scholarly theories regarding the dates of issue and choice of coin types, which suggests that the coins were first minted in Constans’ territories.

⁹⁵ Salway 2008: 302. For the location of the consular games, see Cameron 2013: 199–205.

⁹⁶ *PLRE* 1: 705–706 (Placidus 2), and 510 (Limenius 2).

⁹⁷ This is explored in the final section of this chapter, “Courts and Careers”.

⁹⁸ Of all the constitutions issued to Urban Prefects of Rome in 340–350, only one has a place of issue that firmly identifies Constans as the issuer: *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.1 (given at Milan, on 25 June 340).

token, it appears that Constantius II was primarily in charge of managing relationships with Constantinople. On 9 September 340 he wrote from Antioch to outline the expenses of three praetorships in the city.⁹⁹ This division of the new Rome and the old was really a product of territorial allocation, and did not reflect any real dichotomy on how to manage issues of government policy such as pagan cults and temples in Rome and Italy. In 341, Constans fulminated to the *vicarius* of Italy, L. Crepereius Madalianus, ordering the end of pagan sacrifices, following the law of Constantine.¹⁰⁰ Magnentius permitted nocturnal sacrifices again during his brief usurpation, but his decision was rescinded by Constantius II in a letter to Naeratius Cerialis, Urban Prefect of Rome in 353, thus restoring affairs as they had been under his brother's authority.¹⁰¹ Legislation regarding the preservation of tombs issued throughout the 340s and 350s shows continuities in the way the emperors managed affairs in the city of Rome.¹⁰² In the 350s, Constantius II freely cited the legislation of his brother Constans and Vulcacius Rufinus, his Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Africa, in a constitution regarding the amount of funds Italian residents had to provide to support the provision of wine for the imperial court.¹⁰³ Therefore, the division of imperial responsibilities did not result in radically different policies towards Rome and Italy.

Indeed, Callu has demonstrated that the constitutions of Constans and Constantius II preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus* reveal consistency in imperial policies on a range of financial, legal, administrative, and religious issues throughout the empire.¹⁰⁴ For example, protections for provincials against exactions by imperial officials were enforced in 340 in the territories of both Constans (in August) and Constantius II (in October).¹⁰⁵ Even if this was not a co-ordinated action, it shows a similar approach to government, which the brothers inherited from their father Constantine. In his laws, Constantine portrayed himself as the guardian of his people's

⁹⁹ *Cod. Theod.* 6.4.5–6. See Skinner 2008: 142–143, on these praetorships. On Constantinople see also the chapter by Meaghan McEvoy in this volume.

¹⁰⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.2.

¹⁰¹ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.5.

¹⁰² *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.1 (340), 9.17.2 (349), 9.17.3–4 (356).

¹⁰³ *Cod. Theod.* 11.1.6 (353, issued by Constantius II, but referring back to a law of Constans enforced by Vulcacius Rufinus). For the date, see Barnes 1993: 221, 314, n. 31.

¹⁰⁴ Callu 1992: 39–50; Maraval 2013: 196.

¹⁰⁵ Callu 1992: 48; *Cod. Theod.* 7.9.1 (received at Capua, 12 August), 7.9.2 (issued to Constantius II's Praetorian Prefect Leontius on 11 October).

rights in the face of administrative corruption, as Dillon has shown.¹⁰⁶ We can observe this philosophy in action in imperial laws dealing with the *cursus publicus*. The transport system was managed by the Praetorian Prefects to ensure that the *agentes in rebus* were able to travel smoothly across the empire.¹⁰⁷ However, the prefects could not themselves issue warrants for the *cursus publicus*, which could only be distributed by the *magister officiorum* (the commander of the *agentes*), as Constantius II was forced to remind his Praetorian Prefect Flavius Taurus in 357.¹⁰⁸ The emperor wished to curtail the number of unauthorised warrants granted by the prefects, since excessive use of the *cursus publicus* caused great strain on the animals, which were provided by provincials.¹⁰⁹ If the animals were unable to perform their duties, officials on urgent business often appropriated emergency beasts, causing Constantius II to lament that this practice had destroyed the livelihoods of many individuals.¹¹⁰ The emperor's stern rulings on these matters displayed his concerns for the people of the empire to all levels of the imperial hierarchy.¹¹¹

The prefects were also required to enforce laws and punish malpractice within the imperial administration on behalf of the emperors. In 358 there was an unfortunate incident in the prefecture of Oriens when the necessary supplies for the soldiers failed to reach the outpost of Callinicum in Euphratensis. The Praetorian Prefect, Hermogenes, blamed the governor of Syria, Nicentius, for this failure and had him removed from office.¹¹² Libanius wrote to his friend Aristaenetus, *vicarius* of the diocese of Pietas, to ask him to intercede on behalf of Nicentius with the prefect. The orator explained that Nicentius had taken the fall for someone else—"this is like the situation at Aulis" (τοῦτο δὴ τὸ ἐν Αὐλίδι), he memorably remarked—and the fault actually lay with the governor of Euphratensis.¹¹³ Libanius' missive to the *vicarius* Aristaenetus evidently failed to sway the Praetorian

¹⁰⁶ Dillon 2012: 119–191. See also Kelly 2004: 213–215, who draws attention to the purpose of the forceful imperial rhetoric.

¹⁰⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 6.29.2 (356). For the workings of the *cursus publicus*, see Jones 1964: 830–834.

¹⁰⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.9.

¹⁰⁹ *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.8 (357).

¹¹⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.7 (354); Jones 1964: 832–833. For Constantine's rulings on the subject, see Dillon 2012: 171–172.

¹¹¹ See the comments of Schmidt-Hofner 2014: 83–84, discussing the legislation of Valentinian I and Valens on the same matter.

¹¹² *PLRE* 1: 628 (Nicentius 1).

¹¹³ Lib., *Ep.* F21 = N34.

Prefect, and poor Nicentius was sacrificed on the altar of administrative incompetence, living out his days as a private citizen in Egypt. But the failure was a serious one from the point of view of an imperial administration, since the supplies had been provided by the Syrian people, and the transport of the grain to Callinicum had been subsidized by members of the curial classes.¹¹⁴ Now that they had been squandered, a government official had to be punished by the prefect, lest it reflect badly on the emperor's role as protector of the provincials. This philosophy of government was the same throughout the reigns of Constantine's sons, who were following the model established by their father.¹¹⁵ Imperial and prefectural letters and edicts simultaneously articulated the authority and concern of the administration.

The management of this system of government required continual negotiation between emperors and their prefects, and between prefects and other imperial officials. Conflicts over authority and jurisdiction proved to be the inevitable result of an administrative system that evolved on an *ad hoc* basis. For example, there were two high-ranking imperial officials in Italy—the *praefectus urbi* at Rome, and the Praetorian Prefect. In 357, Constantius II wrote to Flavius Taurus, prefect of Italy and Africa, to confirm that he was indeed entitled to hear appeals in Italian provinces.¹¹⁶ The emperor stated: "In fact, there can be no confusion. For the Urban Prefect, who has been appraised by our rescript, knows that he must refrain from conducting hearings on the affairs mentioned here."¹¹⁷ This tense tone suggests that the original letter was issued in response to a conflict between the Urban Prefect of Rome and the Praetorian Prefect over their jurisdiction within Italy. Taurus was also the recipient of another imperial missive concerning the prefects' authority in matters of taxation. Constantius II ordered that tax collection carried out by governors, *praefecti annonae*, and *rationales*, was not subject to interference "by senior judges" (*a maioribus iudicibus*), by which he meant *vicarii* and Praetorian Prefects.¹¹⁸ In this case, it seems to have been Taurus himself, or perhaps

¹¹⁴Liebeschuetz 1972: 163; Pollard 2000: 221–223. Libanius himself was motivated at least in part by his desire to keep his own friends in high places: see Kelly 2004: 172–173.

¹¹⁵This approach would continue throughout the fourth century: see Schmidt-Hofner 2014.

¹¹⁶*Cod. Theod.* 11.30.27 (357).

¹¹⁷*Nec vero ulla poterit esse confusio. Praefectus enim urbis nostra responsione conventus praedictis cognitionibus temperandum sibi esse cognovit.*

¹¹⁸*Cod. Theod.* 11.7.8 (356).

one of his *vicarii*, who overstepped the mark. The prefects' authority in this area was restricted to hearing appeals made by provincials against unjust taxation.¹¹⁹ There could also be conflicts between the prefects themselves over their regional authority. In June 357, Constantius II declared that "we will allow none of our prefects to pay out rations from the *annona* in another's region" (*nullum patimur praefectorum in aliena dioecesi emolumenta annonaria erogare*).¹²⁰ In the heading of the law preserved in the *Codex*, this letter is addressed to Strategius Musonianus, then Prefect of Oriens: it may be the case that Musonianus had come into conflict with one of his colleagues and requested imperial clarification.¹²¹ Musonianus himself felt the emperor's wrath when he strayed well beyond his purview into matters of foreign policy. In 357, he negotiated with the Persians on the emperor's behalf when Constantius II was in the West, visiting Rome.¹²² However, he did so without consulting with the Augustus himself, overstepping his authority, as Constantius II plainly stated in a subsequent letter to the Persian king.¹²³ These examples show that even with an empire ruled by one Augustus, there could be problems in realising the vision of a united government. The system of regional prefectures did not necessarily ensure that administration ran smoothly. Conflicts of authority could occur at various levels, and were the natural product of a hierarchical bureaucratic administration.¹²⁴

This discussion suggests that there we should not impose a firm dichotomy between the government of the 340s under the two Augusti Constans and Constantius II, and in the 350s under Constantius II. Despite the tensions which existed between Constans and Constantius II, especially in religious matters, other aspects of government, such as the consular nominations and coinage reform, evince significant negotiation and cooperation between the emperors. In terms of the style of administration, all the sons of Constantine took their cue from their father, in the sense that they positioned themselves as the guardians of the provincials against their own officials, ensuring that this would be the model to be followed in subsequent generations of imperial rule.

¹¹⁹ *Cod. Theod.* 11.16.7 (356).

¹²⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 1.5.6, with 1.5.7, also part of the same law.

¹²¹ Matthews 2000: 281–288; Seeck 1919: 6.

¹²² *Amm. Marc.* 16.9.2–4, 10.21.

¹²³ *Amm. Marc.* 16.5.12.

¹²⁴ See the masterful survey of Kelly 2004.

COURTS AND CAREERS

The careers of senior government officials in the 340s have a dual character, reflecting both the unity of the administration under Constans and Constantius II and the influence of regional dynamics on appointments. Each Augustus had his own court establishment, coteries and *comites*, but there was no restriction that prevented high-level administrators from serving both emperors at different times in their careers.¹²⁵ For example, two prominent senatorial aristocrats, Furius Placidus and Vulcacius Rufinus, followed a very similar career path in the 340s. They were both *comes ordinis primi* (of an unnamed emperor), before being appointed *comes* of Oriens, Egypt, and Mesopotamia under Constantius II. They then subsequently became Praetorian Prefects under Constans.¹²⁶ The Syrian official Anatolius Azutrio was *vicarius Asianae* in 339 under Constantius II, then travelled to the court of Constans, when he was based in Trier. There he held unspecified posts, perhaps serving as *comes*, before becoming the first Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum in 343.¹²⁷ Our final example is Ulpian Limenius, proconsul of Constantinople in 342, who was subsequently Constans' Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Urban Prefect in 347–349.¹²⁸ These men demonstrate that there was no barrier between the territories of the Augusti as far as administrative careers are concerned.¹²⁹ The fact that all four of the senior administrators discussed here only obtained a praetorian prefecture under Constans, rather than his brother, is perhaps indicative of the larger number of opportunities to hold this position in the West. From 343 onwards, Constans required three prefects, while Constantius II had only one until 351. In his panegyric delivered in 344, Libanius praised the emperors for changing their prefects often, thus allowing more men a share in the imperial power.¹³⁰ But once Constantius II found a loyal prefect in Flavius Philippus, who held the post from 344 to 351, he saw no reason to alter the situation,

¹²⁵ Harries 2012: 191–192.

¹²⁶ Furius Placidus: *PLRE* 1: 705–706 (Placidus 2); *CIL* 10 1700 = *ILS* 1231. Vulcacius Rufinus: *PLRE* 1: 782–783 (Rufinus 25); *CIL* 6 32051 = *ILS* 1237.

¹²⁷ Bradbury 2000: 185. *Vicarius: Cod. Theod.* 11.30.19, 12.1.28 (339). Constans' court: Eunap., *VS.* 490, 492. Illyricum: Barnes 1992: 258.

¹²⁸ *PLRE* 1: 510 (Limenius 2). As Callu 1992: 57, remarks, the appointment of Limenius was probably not the result of a dispute between Constans and the Senate in Rome.

¹²⁹ Cf. Vogler 1979: 140, interpreting the appointments of Limenius and Hermogenes as a product of the post-346 detente between the brothers.

¹³⁰ Lib., *Or.* 59.164.

meaning that ambitious men would find employment as prefects under Constans instead.¹³¹

The careers of officials who served at court and always travelled with the emperors, such as the *magister officiorum*, *comes rei privatae*, and other ministers who formed part of the *consistorium*, reveal a different pattern to the Praetorian Prefects.¹³² Constans relied on several ministers who remained with him throughout their careers. One of the dominant officials was the *magister officiorum* Flavius Eugenius, who “had held all the palatine offices” (*omnibusque palatinis | dignitatibus functo*) at Constans’ court in his ascent to this senior post.¹³³ Another official closely attached to Constans was Eustathius, who is attested as *comes rei privatae* in 345, when Athanasius bribed him to gain access to the emperor.¹³⁴ Eustathius was subsequently appointed acting Praetorian Prefect and Urban Prefect in Rome in April–May 349, following the death of the incumbent Limenius, a posting which suggests that the emperor had sent a trusted advisor to take temporary control.¹³⁵ In addition to prefects and ministers who were ex-officio *comites*, a number of senior senators were also attached to Constans’ court at various times, which entitled them to membership of the *consistorium*.¹³⁶ For example, L. Crepereius Madalinus was *comes ordinis primi* between his appointments as *vicarius Italiae* in 341 and proconsul of Africa later in the 340s.¹³⁷ His contemporary M. Nummius Albinus was *comes domesticus ordinis primi* between his urban praetorship and ordinary consulship in 345, but held no governorships or

¹³¹The lack of barriers between East and West undoubtedly extended to governorships as well. For example, Scylacius was *vicarius* of Asiana in 343 (in the territory of Constantius II) and then subsequently proconsul of Achaia (*PLRE* 1: 811 (Scylacius 1); Himer., *Or.* 25). There is no reason to assume that Scylacius could not hold the proconsulship of Achaia before 350 simply because the prefecture of Illyricum was in Constans’ territory (cf. Penella 2007: 208).

¹³²On the composition of the *consistorium*, see Vogler 1979: 216–219; Maraval 2013: 184–185.

¹³³*PLRE* 1: 291–292 (Eugenius 2); *CIL* 6 1721. Athanasius, *Ap. Const.* 3, places him at court in 342, when *PLRE* suggests he may have been *magister admissionum*. Lib., *Or.* 14.10–11, portrays him in a negative light, claiming that he seized his relatives’ property.

¹³⁴*PLRE* 1: 310–311 (Eustathius 2); Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.12.

¹³⁵*Chron.* 354 (*MGH Chron. min.* 1: 68) records an interregnum at this point, but Eustathius evidently received *Cod. Theod.* 2.1.1, 11.7.6, at Rome (Barnes 1992: 258).

¹³⁶On membership of this body, see Jones 1964: 333–334. For *comites* of Constans, see Callu 1992: 52–53.

¹³⁷*PLRE* 1: 530 (Madalianus); *CIL* 8 5348 = *ILS* 1228.

any provincial positions.¹³⁸ Their careers suggest that they were attached to Constans' court for a short time in the early to mid-340s, when he is attested in Trier and Milan.¹³⁹ These aristocratic *comites* functioned as an important link between the Senate in Rome and the imperial court, demonstrating the extent to which both these institutions were mutually dependent.¹⁴⁰ Constans' court probably attracted a greater number of short-term *comites* from the aristocracy of Rome because it was regarded as preferable to travel to cities such as Trier or Milan than to Syria, where Constantius II was primarily based during the 340s.¹⁴¹

The evidence for Constantius II's administration reveals that senatorial aristocrats did serve in high office in the East, especially in the earlier years of his reign. We have already noted the appointments of Furius Placidus and Vulcacius Rufinus as *comes Orientis*, and to these we should add Septimius Acindynus, who was Constantius II's Praetorian Prefect from 338 to 340.¹⁴² However, much like his brother, Constantius II also relied on a select group of court officials who held positions under him alone.¹⁴³ These included the *comes* Datianus, a *notarius* who had worked his way up through the administration, eventually becoming ordinary consul in 358.¹⁴⁴ Other *notarii* who rose to high office under Constantius II include Domitianus, *comes sacrarum largitionum* and Praetorian Prefect of Gallus, as well as Flavius Philippus, Praetorian Prefect from 344 to 351.¹⁴⁵ Their careers show that there were ample opportunities for men to rise from the provincial administration to the imperial court without leaving the eastern provinces.¹⁴⁶ For example, a certain Nemesianus from Asia Minor was a *rationalis* in Egypt under Constantine, then provincial governor, and finally *comes sacrarum largitionum* under Constantius II.¹⁴⁷ This

¹³⁸ *PLRE* 1: 37 (Albinus 13); *CIL* 6 1748.

¹³⁹ See Barnes 1993: 225, for Constans' itinerary in these years.

¹⁴⁰ This is one of the central themes of Matthews 1975, which examines the patterns of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, as well as Humphries 2003.

¹⁴¹ Note the remarks of Barnes 1989: 319–321, on Constans' relations with the pagan senatorial aristocracy.

¹⁴² *PLRE* 1: 11 (Acindynus 2).

¹⁴³ Barnes 1989: 313–315, compiles two lists of Constantius II's *comites* in 345/346 and 351 from ecclesiastical sources, many of whom later appear in high administrative office under the same emperor.

¹⁴⁴ *PLRE* 1: 243–244 (Datianus 1); Lib., *Ep.* F1184 = N126.

¹⁴⁵ *PLRE* 1: 262 (Domitianus 1); *Amm. Marc.* 14.7.9.

¹⁴⁶ Callu 1992: 62; Maraval 2013: 180.

¹⁴⁷ *PLRE* 1: 621 (Nemesianus 1); Vogler 1979: 229.

prosopographical analysis indicates that during the 340s the government of Constans and Constantius II included high-level officials who served both emperors, as well as those who spent their careers in only the western or eastern administrations. The collegial government led to the creation of regional court coteries and career paths, but they were not exclusive, and did not compromise the essential unity of the Roman empire.

Constantius II's defeat of Magnentius and the acquisition of the western provinces resulted in a change of political fortunes for those senators, such as the Urban Prefect Fabius Titianus, who had supported the usurper's regime.¹⁴⁸ But these upheavals did not necessarily alter the fundamental pattern of interaction between the imperial court and the Roman aristocracy at large. Senators who had never previously travelled to the East to attend the court of Constantius II now willingly embraced him as his brother's replacement in the West. Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus led an embassy from the Senate to Constantius II during Magnentius' revolt, and was later given a position on the emperor's *consistorium* as *comes ordinis primi*.¹⁴⁹ The elderly Maecilius Hilarianus, who had begun his career under Constantine, was appointed Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Africa in 354.¹⁵⁰ Court officials whose careers had been fostered under Constans' administration continued to serve in western posts under Constantius II. Saturninus Secundus Salutius, a former governor of Aquitania and Africa, as well as *magister memoriae* under Constans, was appointed *comes ordinis primi* and *quaestor* to Julian in Gaul, acting as one of the Caesar's senior advisors.¹⁵¹ Eusebius "Mattyocopus", *comes rei privatae* of Constans in 342, appears again in 355 taking part in the conspiracy against Silvanus (he hoped to receive a consulship as his reward).¹⁵² The careers of these senators and courtiers in the 340s and 350s were largely dictated by their residence in the West, rather than the particular emperor they served.¹⁵³ On the other hand, the acquisition of the West opened up new opportunities for high office for men who had previously served as Constantius II's

¹⁴⁸ Hunt 1998: 10, 21–22; Humphries 2003: 38–39.

¹⁴⁹ PLRE 1: 651–653 (Orfitus 3); Vogler 1979: 218.

¹⁵⁰ PLRE 1: 433 (Hilarianus 5).

¹⁵¹ PLRE 1: 814–817 (Secundus 3); CIL 6 1764 = ILS 1255. Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 281d, and Zos. 3.2.2, do not give specific posts. Harries 1988: 156 links this service with the posts as *quaestor* and *comes* on his career inscription.

¹⁵² PLRE 1: 302 (Eusebius 6); Amm. Marc. 15.5.4, 13.

¹⁵³ It should be pointed out, however, that Secundus Salutius became such a trusted adherent of Julian that he later accompanied him to the East as Praetorian Prefect.

comites in the East during the 340s.¹⁵⁴ The most notable of these were Flavius Florentius and Flavius Taurus: Florentius was appointed Praetorian Prefect of Gaul to watch over Julian in 357, while Taurus became Praetorian Prefect of Italy and Africa in 355.¹⁵⁵ Florentius and Julian had a rocky relationship, since the prefect's loyalties lay squarely with Constantius II, and he often appealed to the Augustus to overturn Julian's decisions.¹⁵⁶ When Julian rebelled, both Florentius and Taurus hurriedly abandoned their posts to return to Constantius II.¹⁵⁷ This prosopographical analysis shows a continuance of the trends observable in the 340s. Some senators and courtiers who had always remained in the West adapted to a new emperor. The fortunes of others were intimately linked to Constantius II and they followed him from the East, indicating that they were not tied to any particular geographical location. It is evident, therefore, that careers could be dictated by both regional and political factors.

This interaction between centre and periphery can also be observed in the workings of politics and patronage at the imperial court itself. Competition for office was fierce, and a personal presence at the imperial court or access to members of the *consistorium* was often essential for advancement.¹⁵⁸ For example, soon after the defeat of Constantine II in 340, the Urban Prefect of Rome, Fabius Titianus, left his post and the city to visit Constans at Milan.¹⁵⁹ The journey to see the emperor was obviously effective and well timed, since Titianus was appointed Praetorian Prefect of Gaul in 342, an office he held until 350. After Constans' murder, he eagerly embraced the cause of Magnentius and was despatched back to Rome as *praefectus urbi* for a second time.¹⁶⁰ The letters of the Antiochene philosopher and intellectual Libanius provide a different perspective on the workings of court connections, showing how a provincial grandee could obtain favours and positions for his protégés. Libanius'

¹⁵⁴ Maraval 2013: 190.

¹⁵⁵ *PLRE* 1: 365 (Florentius 10); *PLRE* 1: 879–880 (Taurus 3).

¹⁵⁶ For example, Amm. Marc. 17.3.2–6 (disagreement on provincial taxation); Julian., *Ep ad Ath.* 280a–b (on payments to barbarians); Julian., *Ep. ad Ath.* 282c–d; Amm. Marc. 20.4.2 (the prefect asks Constantius II to remove the army from Julian's command).

¹⁵⁷ Amm. Marc. 21.9.4; Zos. 3.10.4.

¹⁵⁸ See the discussion of Kelly 2004: 129–137, 158–185.

¹⁵⁹ Titianus' absence from Rome to visit the emperor: *Chron.* 354 (*MGH Chron. min.* 1: 68). Constans at Milan: *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.1 (340). Titianus' journey shows that it is highly unlikely that Constans himself came to Rome, as suggested by Barnes 1975: 327–328.

¹⁶⁰ *Chron.* 354 (*MGH Chron. min.* 1 p. 69); *CIL* 6 1166–1167.

network was initially confined to imperial officials stationed at Antioch, and he often lobbied the Praetorian Prefect of Oriens for governorship for his friends.¹⁶¹ However, from 355 onwards, Libanius acquired powerful contacts at court, using the *notarius* Spectatus and the *agens in rebus* Clematius to deliver his letters to Milan, Sirmium, or wherever else Constantius II happened to be resident.¹⁶² One of Libanius' primary contacts was Florentius, who was acting *magister officiorum* of Constantius II in 355, before being promoted to the post itself in 359.¹⁶³ Between these two appointments, Florentius remained an influential courtier (or held other unknown posts), as Libanius still wrote to him in these years.¹⁶⁴ While in office as *magister officiorum* in 359, Florentius was able to advance the career of Libanius' friend Priscianus.¹⁶⁵ The letters show that Florentius first invited Priscianus to travel to court in Sirmium, after which he was appointed *praeses* of Euphratensis.¹⁶⁶ This interesting exchange shows that Libanius did not necessarily have to approach the Praetorian Prefect of Oriens in order to secure a governorship for Priscianus in that region. It was not only prospective *praesides* who journeyed to court to petition for office, as we find even more illustrious officials making similar journeys. The Syrian Anatolius, another correspondent of Libanius, travelled to Constantius II's court at Milan not once, but twice, in the hope of securing the prefecture of Illyricum which he coveted, turning down the post of *praefectus urbi* in the process.¹⁶⁷

The movement of the emperor and the court from one region to another could alter the position and influence of Praetorian Prefects.¹⁶⁸ If no emperor was present, then they were the highest imperial authority in their prefecture, and communication with the court generally had to be by correspondence. However, when the emperor and court were present, the Praetorian Prefect had the opportunity to sit on the *consistorium* and advise the emperor in person. Two scenarios from the 350s demonstrate

¹⁶¹ On the eastern correspondents, see Vogler 1979: 66–68; Bradbury 2014: 232–233. For governorships, see Liebeschuetz 1972: 111–112; Slootjes 2006: 26–27, 40.

¹⁶² Vogler 1979: 230; Bradbury 2004: 32; 2014: 234–235.

¹⁶³ *PLRE* 1: 363 (Florentius 3); Bradbury 2014: 236.

¹⁶⁴ Bradbury 2004: 65; Lib., *Ep.* F510 = B36, F351 = B37.

¹⁶⁵ *PLRE* 1: 727 (Priscianus 1).

¹⁶⁶ Lib., *Ep.* F61 = B39; Bradbury 2004: 67–68.

¹⁶⁷ Bradbury 2000: 174–175; Kelly 2004: 194; Lib., *Ep.* F391.13–16 = N4; F512.4–5 = B56.

¹⁶⁸ Feissel 1991: 438.

these factors at play. The first involves C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, who was elevated to be Praetorian Prefect of Gaul in 354, when Constantius II was himself present there.¹⁶⁹ Volusianus was part of a cabal of officials who plotted the downfall of Gallus by claiming that the Caesar wanted to become Augustus himself. The prefect took advantage of his proximity to the emperor to inform him of this manufactured rumour, in the hope of winning Constantius II's favour.¹⁷⁰ By the winter of 354, Constantius II had moved to Milan, which served as his principal campaigning base.¹⁷¹ Volusianus was still involved in court intrigues, however, as he formed part of a conspiracy which sought to overthrow the *magister equitum* Silvanus. But he had to travel from Gaul to Milan in the winter of 355 in order to present to the emperor in person the letters implicating Silvanus in an act of treason.¹⁷² Volusianus remained at court in Milan while the case against Silvanus was being considered, only to be tried for his own complicity in the sordid affair, losing his prefecture in the process.¹⁷³ This case illustrates how even a Praetorian Prefect like Volusianus needed to move outside his prefecture and travel to court in order to advance his own agenda.

On the other side of the equation, prefects could gain new influence when the emperor and the court moved into their region. We can see this in the case of Anatolius, Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum, who hosted Constantius II and his court at Sirmium between June 357 and June 359.¹⁷⁴ In 357, Libanius wrote to Anatolius to thank him for arranging the appointment of Clematius as governor of Palestine.¹⁷⁵ Another letter, sent in the winter of 358/359, reveals that Anatolius had helped secure the post of *consularis Syriae* for a certain Sabinus.¹⁷⁶ Both these provinces lay within the territory of the praetorian prefect of Oriens, but Anatolius was evidently able to arrange these appointments for Libanius' friends. It cannot be a coincidence, as Bradbury has noted, that Constantius II and

¹⁶⁹ *PLRE* 1: 978–980 (Volusianus 5).

¹⁷⁰ *Zos.* 2.55.3. Ammianus does not name the friends with whom Constantius II consulted when deciding to recall Gallus (*Amm. Marc.* 14.11.1)

¹⁷¹ Barnes 1993: 221.

¹⁷² *Amm. Marc.* 15.4.13 (Constantius II at Milan), 5.5 (Volusianus hands the letters to Constantius II at Milan).

¹⁷³ *Amm. Marc.* 15.5.13. Ammianus does not discuss how Volusianus came to be at Milan, but it is clear that he must have travelled there in order to see Constantius II in the emperor's private apartments.

¹⁷⁴ Barnes 1993: 222–223.

¹⁷⁵ *Lib., Ep.* F563.3 = B59; *PLRE* 1: 213–214 (Clematius 2).

¹⁷⁶ *Lib., Ep.* F339.3–4 = B62; *PLRE* 1: 791–792 (Sabinus 5).

his court were resident at Sirmium at precisely this time, implying that Anatolius was able to influence the emperor or his court officials.¹⁷⁷ This is an excellent example of how the peripatetic imperial court could magnify the importance of a regional centre, such as Sirmium, and increase the power of an already-influential official such as Anatolius. Likewise, when the imperial *comitatus* came to Antioch in the last year of Constantius II's reign, and especially under Julian, Libanius' own ability to access the court improved immeasurably.¹⁷⁸ The mobile imperial court altered the networks of influence and power as it moved throughout the different regions of the empire. The cases discussed in this section show how administrative careers could be pursued across the entire empire under Constantine's sons, but their precise course could be constrained or advanced by a series of regional, political, and personal factors. It was access to the emperor that remained paramount, proving that there would always be an imperial centre, even if it was elsewhere than at Rome.

CONCLUSION

The government of Constantine's sons had an ambition to be unified and far-reaching, with imperial colleges and regional prefectures designed to ensure that an imperial presence was maintained in key areas throughout the empire. This framework of government was the result of a system inherited from Constantine, as well as a series of *ad hoc* changes developed under the sons themselves, most notably the institution of regional prefectures. Multiple emperors, each with a peripatetic court and administration, ensured that armies and frontiers would receive adequate attention. Even when an emperor was campaigning elsewhere, the Praetorian Prefects would tour their regions to see that imperial rule and justice were maintained. Emperors issued stern edicts and commands to their prefects, who would then disseminate these orders down through the hierarchy to *vicarii* and governors, or liaise with *magistri* at court and in the army. The rhetoric of government found in these constitutions claimed to safeguard the rights and privileges of provincials against abuses, continuing the ideology of law established by Constantine. The orders of imperial *comites* integrated senatorial aristocrats and government bureaucrats alike into a brotherhood supporting the emperor, and encouraged a continuing

¹⁷⁷ Bradbury 2000: 177.

¹⁷⁸ Bradbury 2014: 239.

connection between the city of Rome and the imperial courts. Under their unified administration, Praetorian Prefects, Urban Prefects, and consuls could serve both Constans and Constantius II, who collaborated on appointments to these high offices. The concentration of favourites at individual courts did not dull opportunities at the apex of the *cursus honorum*, but created an environment in which multiple groups of courtiers competed for imperial favour.

This unified empire did not always function in a well-oiled manner, of course. The government could be afflicted by personal and political rivalries between imperial brothers or administrators and courtiers. The regional systems of government which were supposed to connect the disparate parts of the empire together sometimes exposed signs of tension. One Augustus might be lobbied to over-rule the policy of his colleague and brother, as in the case of Athanasius, or a governor might approach the wrong emperor for advice, as shown by the proconsul of Africa who wrote to Constantine II rather than Constans. On occasions, the relationships between the Augusti themselves might break down, so that different consuls were recognised in different parts of the empire. Praetorian Prefects could overstep their mark, and interfere in the purview of their colleague in a different region, or even the Urban Prefect of Rome. Caesars assigned to a specific regions might not behave the way they were supposed to, even with trusted officials assigned to them by the Augustus—both Julian and Gallus proved to be failures for Constantius II in their own ways. Above all else, the influence of officials still depended very much on their ability to gain access to the imperial court, and to the emperor himself. The movement of the *comitatus* from region to region and city to city changed the pathways of power and patronage, decreasing the influence of those left behind, while offering tantalising opportunities to officials at the new destination. These problems do not mean that the ambition of a unified government under multiple emperors went entirely unrealised. Indeed, as this chapter has argued, there was perhaps greater unity and collaboration between Constans and Constantius II than they have been given credit for. But the largely *ad hoc* manner in which the imperial administration evolved meant that it continually required negotiation and compromise between emperors, senators, and officials in order to be able to function effectively.

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CHAPTER 9

Governing the Empire: The Effects of the Diocletianic and Constantinian Provincial Reforms Under the Sons of Constantine

Daniëlle Slootjes

INTRODUCTION

After a century of serious crises, the emperor Diocletian (284–305) set in motion a series of reforms at the end of third century to stabilize the Roman empire. Constantine the Great (306–337) was responsible for the continuation of this process of reforms. The administrative structures of the empire were transformed into a system of dioceses and prefectures on top of the existing organization of the empire's territory into the provinces. Furthermore, many former provinces were subdivided into more and smaller units. Modern scholarship tends to focus on the period of implementation of these reforms at the beginning of the fourth century and then to leap forward to the rule of the emperor Theodosius I at the

D. Slootjes (✉)

Department of History, Radboud Institute for Culture & History,
Radboud University Nijmegen, Nijmegen, Netherlands
e-mail: d.slootjes@let.ru.nl

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end of the fourth century when many decades had passed in which the reforms had had time to embed within the larger administrative structures. In other words, the decades following the death of Constantine the Great, the age of the sons of Constantine, have remained relatively under-exposed within studies on the provincial administration of the empire, even though these must have been crucial decades in terms of the implementation and the effects of the reforms felt at local level.

This chapter examines the ways in which the ancient evidence for the age of the sons of Constantine, that is, Constantine II (316–340), Constantius II (317–361) and Constans (323–350), offers insights into the functioning of the Roman empire’s administration in a period that can be considered decisive for the continuation of the stability of the empire after the challenging third century. The analysis will explore (1) the effects of the administrative reforms on the geographical structures of the empire with a particular focus on the provinces and dioceses; (2) the legal involvement of the sons of Constantine with the functioning of the administrative structures; and (3) the effects of the reforms on the careers of governors and *vicarii*.

SOURCES FOR PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

There exists no coherent corpus of ancient sources dealing with the structure and functioning of the provincial administration of the empire in the fourth century. The evidence stems from a broad range of types of sources, such as legal, literary and epigraphic sources.¹ In other words, one needs to look at many different types of sources and genres to catch a glimpse of the way in which the provincial administration functioned and was perceived.

Notable, however, are two administrative documents, the Verona List (*Laterculus Veronensis*) and the *Notitia Dignitatum*, that offer insights into the arrangement of the late antique provinces, the dioceses and their officials. The Verona List contained a list of the provinces and dioceses of the empire. Modern scholars have disagreed about the precise date of the list, although it seems clear now that it should be dated to the first decades of the fourth century. In one of the most recent modern discussions, Zuckerman argued for a specific date in the year 314, when Constantine

¹ Cf. Sootjes 2006: 8.

and Licinius had emerged as the two Augusti who had survived and defeated their colleagues in rule. Zuckerman claimed a connection between the creation of the Verona List and the attempt of Constantine and Licinius to introduce a set of reforms that established the official appearance of dioceses as new units within the administrative structures of the empire.²

The *Notitia Dignitatum* presented a catalog of imperial officials, both civil and military, with illustrations of their insignia and shield emblems.³ The document contained two *Notitiae*, a *Notitia Occidentis* for the western half and a *Notitia Orientis* for the eastern half of the later Roman empire. Even though there seems to be a general agreement among modern scholars that both *Notitiae* date to the late fourth or early fifth centuries, there has been serious scholarly debate about a more specific date for each of the *Notitiae*.⁴ Currently, there seems to be a consensus that the *Notitia Orientis* reflected the situation for the East in the period between roughly speaking 386 and 396, and the *Notitia Occidentis* for the West around 419 (but no later than 425). Whereas Bury and Jones considered the *Notitia Dignitatum* as a document written purely for administrative purposes as a sort of overview and checklist for the officials at the imperial court, more recently Brennan and Kulikowski have argued for a more ideological value of the document.⁵ Brennan in particular made a case for regarding the document as a whole as a representation of the unity of the empire at a time when that unity was no longer self-evident.

For the purposes of this chapter on the period of the sons of Constantine, the contents of the Verona List and the *Notitia Dignitatum* are important in that they help us to understand the structure of imperial government, respectively at the beginning and at the end of our period. Of further interest is the *Theodosian Code* and the laws dating to the fourth century that ended up in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* under Justinian, because these illustrate how the emperor and his officials dealt with a broad variety of

² See Slootjes 2014: 179–180, for a brief overview of the discussion. See Jones 1964, Appendix III, “Dioceses and Provinces”, 1451ff., and Zuckerman 2002. See also Barnes 1982: 201–208, for a discussion on the date of the Verona List. Barnes thought that it reflected the state of the eastern provinces in the period between 314/315 and 324, and for the western provinces between 303 and 314. One of the first studies of the Verona List was Bury 1923. See also Migl 1994: 55, 63–64.

³ *RAC* Suppl. 25, “*Notitia Dignitatum*”, 1133–1145.

⁴ Bury 1920; Jones 1964, Appendix II; Mann 1976; Brennan 1996; Kulikowski 2000.

⁵ Bury 1920; Jones 1964: 1417; Brennan 1996; Kulikowski 2000.

issues that emerged in connection to the structure of provincial government and the functioning of the officials involved, that is, provincial governors, *vicarii* and Praetorian Prefects.⁶

THE EFFECT OF THE REFORMS ON THE PROVINCES UNDER DIOCLETIAN AND CONSTANTINE

Traditionally, modern scholarship connects the first set of reforms of the administrative structures under Diocletian to his need for a reorganization of the taxation system because he wanted to increase the empire's tax income. More control over the administration would lead to better control over the tax income. If one takes that argument to the division of the existing provinces into smaller territorial units,⁷ then smaller units were easier to govern and thus it was easier to oversee the taxation in those smaller units.

The ancient sources are scarce, and modern scholars tend to quote Lactantius (*De Mortibus Persecutorum* 7.4) for his negative vision of the reforms that led to an increase in the number of provinces, as he argued that "in order that everything should be filled with terror, the provinces were also cut up into fragments, many governors and even more officials were imposed on individual regions and almost on individual cities, and in addition numerous accountants, financial controllers and prefects' deputies". The nature of Lactantius' work and his judgment of Diocletian as one of the persecutors of the Christians caused Lactantius to not necessarily be objective in his opinion of the emperor.⁸ However, apart from taxation needs there might also have been a military and strategic reasoning behind the increase in the number of provinces. Again, it was easier to control and defend smaller geographical units, and usurpations might be less likely to occur.

The reforms under both Diocletian and Constantine the Great caused fundamental changes to the position of provinces and their governors within the larger structures of the empire's administration. First, the

⁶Harries 1999; Matthews 2000.

⁷The provinces of Baetica and Lusitania seem exceptional in that their territories remained similar to the previous organization. For an impression of the changed territories, see maps 100 and 101 of the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*.

⁸Christensen 1980.

reforms had led to an almost doubling in the number of provinces. The Verona List presents the names of the newly setup provinces, but is silent on the actual decision-making process of the design of the territories of these provinces. Who decided on where the boundaries of the new provinces were to be set?⁹ To what extent were the emperors and/or his officials involved? To what extent were local authorities engaged in this process as well, as presumably local civic boundaries would be used or perhaps even relocated to meet the demands of the central government?

Second, although governors' civil duties remained the same (administrative, financial, judicial) and they could increase their efforts due to the smaller territories and few cities in the provinces, their position of power in the province diminished as they lost their military task. Their former military responsibilities were given to so-called *duces*, military men, who obtained a military command over larger regions that stretched beyond the territory of one province.¹⁰

Third, the creation of dioceses and later prefectures on top of the provinces brought about a change in position for the provinces within the overall administrative structures of the empire. Whereas before the provinces were the largest and most important administrative units that—pieced together—geographically speaking represented the size of the empire, in the new structure the provinces ended up as the smallest units within the administrative structures with a network of dioceses and prefectures on top of them. This change of structure had consequences for—again—the position of governors. Whereas before governors had been top officials who in terms of hierarchy were directly ranked under the emperor, from the reforms onward *vicarii* and Praetorian Prefects were positioned between governors and emperors, thereby degrading the office of governors.¹¹

However, all these changes do not take away the fact that we can also discern continuity in the functioning of provincial government. Provincial governors continued to be sent out to govern the provinces for a relatively short term of office with duties similar to most of their previous duties.

⁹ See Slootjes 2020 (forthcoming) for a study on the decision-making process in relation to in particular the diocese of Hispaniae.

¹⁰ Slootjes 2006: 25–39.

¹¹ Although one has to take into account that fourth-century governors should not be seen as a uniform group, because of a system of various titles and ranks that had developed into four types of governors: *praesides*, *correctores*, *consulares* and *proconsules*. The latter group of the *proconsules* ranked above the *vicarii*. See Slootjes 2006: 16–20.

This almost uninterrupted rhythm in the operation of provincial government should not be underestimated as it formed the backbone of the success of the imperial administrative structures, both before and after the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine the Great.¹²

DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE AT THE END OF THE REIGN OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

By the year 335, Constantine the Great had gradually created the situation in which he shared his imperial and territorial responsibilities with his three sons Constantine II, Constantius II, Constans, and also with his nephews Dalmatius (ca. 315–337) and Hannibalianus (?–337), even though it was quite clear that Constantine the Great was the most senior and influential partner within this group of co-rulers. By 335, Constantine the Great's sons had all three already been appointed as *nobilissimi Caesares*, and on September 18, Constantine elevated Dalmatius to *nobilissimus Caesar* as well, whereas Hannibalianus was honored with the title *Rex Regum et Ponticarum Gentium*.¹³ Except for Hannibalianus, each of these men had a part of the empire's territory assigned to him which led to a geographical division between the various family members.

When Constantine the Great died on 22 May 337, it took his three sons three months to meet each other in Pannonia where on 9 September they had themselves officially proclaimed *Augusti* by the Danubian army.¹⁴ Even though modern scholars have argued over the details of the events that occurred in the interval between the death of Constantine in May and the ceremony on 9 September, it is clear that Dalmatius and Hannibalianus were assassinated before the sons of Constantine were declared *Augusti*, thereby presenting themselves as the rightful successors to their father.¹⁵ In terms of the scope of the territories that were to be ruled by the *Augusti*, Constantine II kept the territory that he already controlled, whereas Constantius and Constans each added half of Dalmatius' territory to their own, Thracia and Moesia respectively.

¹² Slootjes 2006: 182.

¹³ Anonymous Valesianus, *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* 6.35. Barnes 1982: 198; Grünewald 1990: 150–153; Burgess 2008: 8–9.

¹⁴ *Epit. de Caes.* 41. Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.51.1. See Burgess 2008: 11 for the observation that Eusebius seems to have deliberately erased Dalmatius and Hannibalianus from his description as if they had never existed.

¹⁵ Burgess 2008.

The ancient sources describing the geographical divisions of territories and thus of power do not do so in a systematic and unified way in terms of the geographical references and administrative units they mention.¹⁶ As Bleckmann has demonstrated, a critical analysis of the different sources shows the various discrepancies and dependence or lack thereof between the sources.¹⁷ As expected with a division of the empire in such relatively large geographical parts, the authors referring to the division do so by mentioning a combination of larger units such as provinces, regions and even dioceses to present the distinct parts of the empire that fell under the responsibility of the sons of Constantine. As an example, Philostorgius mentioned Oriens, Italia and several individual provinces such as Syria, Palestine or Mesopotamia.¹⁸ The *Epitome de Caesaribus* refers to the dioceses Oriens, Asia, Illyricum, Italia and Africa, but also to the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.¹⁹ More so than the other authors, Zonaras seems to employ names of regions such as the Peloponnesus or names of certain landscapes and mountain ranges such as the Pyrenees.²⁰

Is it possible for us to detect the influence of the administrative reforms of the early decades of the fourth century, in particular the creation of dioceses, on the division of the empire in 335 and 337 among the Constantinian successors? Had the boundaries of the dioceses been used as a guiding principle in the decision and establishment of which territories should be placed under which ruler?²¹ The following two overviews, presented schematically for the sake of a clearer understanding of the division of the territories, show how we might piece together the various types of territories and regions that are mentioned in the sources into the administrative units of the dioceses. The choice for using dioceses here in the overview instead of prefectures follows from Barnes' argument in his 1992 article on Praetorian Prefects, that the prefectures "were created piecemeal under Constans and Constantius" starting in the 340s.²²

¹⁶ *Epit. de Caes.* 41.

¹⁷ Bleckmann 2003: 227–236.

¹⁸ Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.1 (*Artemii Passio* 8).

¹⁹ *Epit. de Caes.* 41.

²⁰ Zonar. 13.5.1–4.

²¹ See Slootjes 2014 for the meaning of diocese boundaries in the fourth century.

²² See Barnes 1992 for the argument that the prefecture of Gaul was created in 340 by Constans after the death of his brother Constantine II, and that the prefectures of Illyricum and Italy were created a few years later in 343. For the prefecture of Oriens, Barnes makes a case that until the year 354 the Praetorian Prefects appointed there were still traditional style

335–337 (Fig. 9.1)²³:

- Constantine II: dioceses of Britanniae, Galliae, Viennensis, Hispaniae, with the addition of the province of Alpes Cottiae²⁴ (officially part of diocese of Italia)
- Constantius: dioceses of Oriens, Asiana and Pontica
- Constans: dioceses of Africa, Pannoniae and Italia (not including the province of Alpes Cottiae)
- Dalmatius: dioceses of Moesia and Thracia

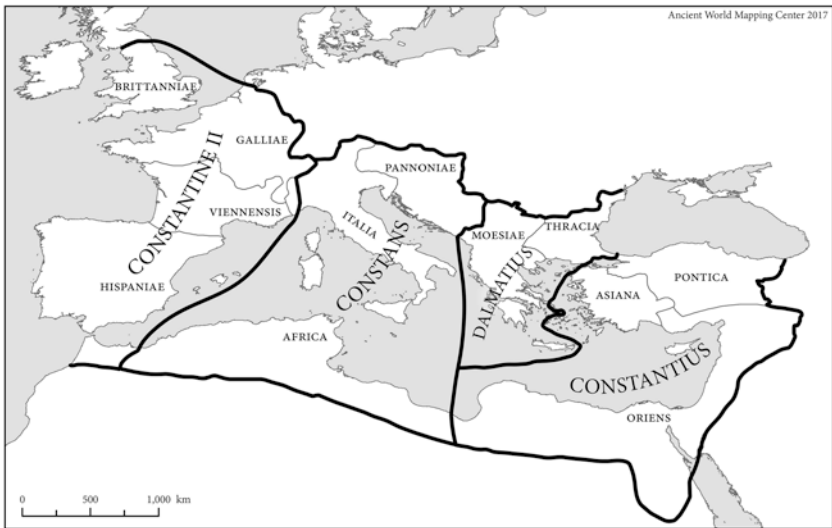


Fig. 9.1 Division of the empire between Constantine II, Constantius II, Constans and Dalmatius, AD 335–337. (Source: Ancient World Mapping Center, Chapel Hill)

prefects, and that Strategius Musonianus (*PLRE* 1: 611–612) was the first Praetorian Prefect selected as the Prefect of Oriens. See also *PLRE* 1, Table B. Praetorian Prefects 337–c.395. See Migl 1994: 161–208, and also the chapter by Caillan Davenport in this volume.

²³ Ancient sources: *Epit. de Caes.* 41; *Zos.* 2.39.2; Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.1 (*Artemii Passio* 8); Theophylact of Ochrid, *Passio XV Martyrum*; Zonar. 13.5.1–4. See Bleckmann 2003.

²⁴ Only Zonar. 13.5.1–4 mentions Alpes Cottiae.

337 (*Fig. 9.2*)²⁵:

- Constantine II: dioceses of Britanniae, Galliae, Viennensis, Hispaniae, with the addition of the province of Alpes Cottiae (officially part of diocese of Italia)
- Constantius: dioceses of Oriens, Asiana, Pontica and Thracia
- Constans: dioceses of Italia, Africa, Pannoniae and Moesia

This overview demonstrates that, even though, as said, the ancient sources use a terminological mixture for the different geographical areas, in the end the combination of the territories corresponds to the administrative units of the dioceses. Does this mean that by and large the territorial boundaries of the new system and its dioceses were so familiar and functioning properly and had thus been used as guiding principles by



Fig. 9.2 Division of the empire between Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans, AD 337. (Source: Ancient World Mapping Center, Chapel Hill)

²⁵The fact that Constantine II seems to have been unhappy about the division, especially because his brothers gained extra territory once Dalmatius and others had been eliminated, which eventually led to civil war in 340 between Constantine II and Constans, is another matter. Bleckmann 2003: 244ff. Ancient sources on Constantine II's unhappiness: *Epit. de Caes.* 41.21; *Zos.* 2. 41.1; Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.1 (*Artemii Passio* 9); *Zonar.* 13.5.7–8.

Constantine in the early 330s and continued to be used by his sons? How are we to understand the role of dioceses in this process of divisions? The fact that the ancient authors do not list the territories strictly according to the administrative structures of the empire is in itself not surprising as these authors did not write an official administrative catalog listing the division, but should be seen perhaps more as a reflection of how people in popular speech and in literary works would refer to different areas in the empire. On the other hand, several of the territories were identified according to the name of the diocese such as Oriens or Illyricum.

Remarkably, within the division of the territories among Constantine's sons, there seems to be one piece of territory, the province of Alpes Cottiae, that was disconnected from its diocese Italia—that was under rule of Constans—and added to the territory of Constantine II who ruled Britanniae, Galliae, Viennensis, Hispaniae. Of all the ancient sources, only Zonaras mentions this particular addition of Alpes Cottiae to the territory of Constantine II. As a twelfth-century source, Zonaras was in time far removed from the fourth century AD, although Bleckmann has convincingly argued for an earlier fourth-century tradition for this particular passage in Zonaras which brings the work back to a time relatively close to the period under review.²⁶

If we are to accept the accuracy of Zonaras' statement, the inclusion of Alpes Cottiae into Constantine II's territory means that in this particular case the diocese boundaries were not taken into account. As a result, in terms of its administration, the unit of the diocese of Italia lost one of its provinces. Unfortunately, we have no evidence for the consequences of this separation for the administration of the province or the dioceses. Presumably, provincial governors would have been appointed in the province. What made the province of Alpes Cottiae of such value, that Constantine II wanted to control it? One look at a map reveals that Alpes Cottiae was a strategic location in terms of the passage through the Alps into the Italian peninsula.²⁷ In other words, as long as Constantine II was in command of Alpes Cottiae, he could swiftly move into Italy and the traditional heartland of the Roman empire. Should we see this desire to control Alpes Cottiae in the light of rivalry between Constantine II and Constans? Was Constantine II more powerful than his brothers, Constans

²⁶ Bleckmann 2003: 230–231, esp. n. 15. Also Bleckmann 1992.

²⁷ Prieur 1968. See Bleckmann 2003: 247 for references to situations in which Alpes Cottiae and its passes over the Alps proved to be of essential strategic value.

in particular, that he could claim this territory? Some scholars have argued that under their father Constantine II seems to have been given preference over his brothers Constans and Constantius, although the ancient sources, the literary as well as the epigraphical and numismatic sources, offer no substantial indications for this favor.²⁸ Besides, as Bleckmann argued convincingly, upon the division in 337 the three brothers must have been in a position of equality, not the least because all three of them were supported by high court and military officials who would not have accepted a hierarchy among the three brothers.²⁹ In the year 340, Constantine II indeed made the swift move into Italy whereby civil war broke out between the brothers. Soon Constantine II lost his life, and Constans took control over the entire western territory of Constantine II. Unfortunately, we have no evidence for Alpes Cottiae in the decades to come, but by the time of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, in the *Notitia Occidentis*, it was listed under the diocese of Italy.

LAW AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EMPIRE

While the sons of Constantine were preoccupied with establishing and maintaining their position as Augusti as well as the stability of the empire against enemies from outside, in the 340s the administrative structures of their empire seem to have functioned without serious problems. This section analyzes the legal involvement of the emperors in the workings of the empire's administrative structures, especially of those of the provinces and dioceses. The *Theodosian Code* contains a little over 250 laws that were issued in the late 330s, the 340s and the 350s under Constans and Constantius.³⁰ As a caveat, one needs to keep in mind that the laws that are left are a selection of a once much larger collection of laws, which could potentially distort our impression of the legal involvement of Constantine's sons.³¹

Within this rather substantial corpus of over 250 laws there are only a few laws that deal directly with the functioning of the provinces, dioceses

²⁸ Cara 1993; Hunt 1998: 5; Bleckmann 2003. See the chapter by Lewis in this volume for a reappraisal of the relationships between the brothers.

²⁹ Bleckmann 2003: 241.

³⁰ Constantine II plays hardly any role in the legal evidence as he was dead by the year 340. Some of the laws of the later 350s were issued by Constantius as Augustus and Julian as Caesar.

³¹ Harries 1999; Matthews 2000.

and their officials. These laws demonstrate that in the first few decades after the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine the Great issues arose about the position of the various officials within the administration in relation to each other. Such issues can be expected considering the significant increase in both the number and types of officials whereby the hierarchy of officials must not always been so clear to the officials involved. In these cases, in particular, the imperial government was asked to clarify or reaffirm the administrative and geographical boundaries of the various offices and their officials.

The newly created office of the *vicarius* had been positioned between the level of provincial governors and the Praetorian Prefect.³² Appointed to govern dioceses, *vicarii* can be seen as intermediaries between the officials of the provincial and imperial level. *Vicarii* were supposed to lighten the burden of the administrative duties of the higher officials, of the praetorian prefects but also of the emperor. Both the laws *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.2 and 1.15.3 are illustrative for a legal clarification of these officials' position. *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.2 of 348, in which the emperor Constantius addressed Caesonianus (*PLRE* 1: 172), the *vicarius* of Africa, ordered the *vicarius* to send a list of provincial cases that were to be judged by the emperor.³³ These were appeals of cases that had been judged already by provincial governors or other officials who represented the imperial fiscus. In other words, the *vicarius* was expected to put this list together, whereas in the situation prior to the reforms officials had sent these lists separately. It was more efficient to have one official collect these various lists into one list. Only a few years later, Constantius issued another law (*Cod. Theod.* 1.15.3), this time to Ilicus (*PLRE* 1: 456), the governor of Numidia, which confirmed the position of *vicarii* as a "filter" for all the cases and petitions that potentially could end up at the emperor's desk.³⁴ Instead of

³² Sootjes 2006: 17–18 n. 8. Modern scholarship usually employs the title of vicar for this official, although in some dioceses he was styled differently. In the diocese of the Orient this official was called the *Comes Orientis*, in Egypt the *Praefectus Augustalis*.

³³ *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.2: "Your Sublimity shall receive and quickly make known to Us the references [= *relationes*, = official reports] of the cases to Us by the judges who govern the provinces (*iudicum qui provincias regunt* = governors), and likewise such references by the fiscal representatives and by all others who desire to have any matter referred to us."

³⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.3: "When the governors of the provinces wish to refer any matter to Us, this matter shall be referred first to the vicar, to whom written instructions have been given that he shall receive the reports and references of the official messengers, which are to be transmitted to My imperial court, and that he shall perform that which he sees ought to

governors sending their requests to the emperor individually and thereby thus burdening the public postal service (*cursus publicus*) as Constantius observed the clustering of these requests by the *vicarius*' office led to more efficiency.

As for the addressees of these laws, the *vicarius* in the first law and the provincial governor in the second, these officials were to be the logical addressees. Both *vicarii* and governors needed to be aware of their position, as it might have been easy for governors to bypass *vicarii* and turn directly to the emperor. Indeed, for centuries governors had been directly in contact with the emperors as governors had been the most important officials within the provincial administrative structures apart from the emperors.³⁵ In the new structures, provincial governors had to reckon with more layers of officials that impeded their direct access to the emperor.

The officials within the imperial administrative structures were not to overstep their position in relation to one another, both in terms of their authority, but also in a physical geographical sense. Constantius wrote to the Praetorian Prefect Musonianus (*PLRE* 1: 611–612) in which the emperor ordered that prefects who were responsible for the supplies of the *annonae* were not allowed to request these supplies in the diocese of others, that is, in a diocese that did not fall under their responsibility (*Cod. Theod.* 1.5.6 of 357/358). Officials were not to interfere in the territories of other officials. Presumably, Constantius' law indicates that in practice this did occur.

One particular law, *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.1 of 361, deserves our special attention. Constantius wrote to the Senate: "When an appeal (*appellatio*) is interposed in Bithynia, Paphlagonia, Lydia, Hellespontus, the islands also, and Phrygia Salutaris, Europa, Rhodope, and Haemimontus, the appellant shall be subject to the sacred imperial court of the Prefect of the City."³⁶ Notably, the provinces that are mentioned are not part of one diocese, but are part of various dioceses, that is, Pontica (Paphlagonia, Bithynia), Asiana (Lydia, Hellespontus, Insulae, Phrygia Salutaris = I) and Thracia (Europa, Rhodope, Haemimontus). The provinces have in common that they are all located around the area of the Black Sea. In terms of

be done. Indeed, in this way, in addition to other advantages, the public post will be strengthened by great relief."

³⁵ *Dig.* 1.18.3 and 1.18.4.

³⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.1 (of 361): *Cum appellatio interposita fuerit per Bithyniam, Paphlagoniam, Lydiam, Hellespontum, insulas etiam ac Phrygiam salutarem, Europam ac Rhodopam et Haemimontum, praefecturae urbi iudicium sacrum appellator observet.*

the higher administrative units, the diocese units seem to have been leading in this law, but the provinces in their turn were all part of the Praetorian Prefecture of the East. Should we consider this law to be evidence for the fact that by its time, the early 360s, the administrative structures of the prefectures were in full operation as well and sometimes overrode the level of the dioceses? Moreover, this law emphasizes that by the early 360s, the provinces were still considered the basic units of the administrative structure. Even though Constantius did not make explicit to which Senate he wrote, that of Rome or of Constantinople, or to which prefect, based on the provincial territories, it seems most likely that his instructions were directed to the Senate of Constantinople and to the Praetorian Prefect of Oriens.

To be sure, the legal evidence for imperial involvement of the sons of Constantine in matters of the administrative structures is relatively thin. This seems to be part of a general trend in the laws that are left to us that they reflect few problems regarding the functioning of the administrative structures and its officials. Before Constantius, there is evidence of only a few laws by Constantine the Great about the position and functioning of vicars.³⁷ At the same time, when the laws were collected into the *Theodosian Code*, the jurists regarded them as important enough for including them into the collection and thus for repeating them.

Ultimately, one might ask how much individual emperors mattered when and once the administrative structures of Roman government functioned smoothly. Over and over again, history has proven that such structures can and will survive the individuals. The era of the sons of Constantine the Great leaves us with the impression that their struggle for power and the preservation of their imperial position took place in a different realm than the operations of their empire's government, as if these were separate worlds. Emperors and their top officials such as the Praetorian Prefects worked closely together, but their distinct responsibilities resulted in different worlds. One might even argue that the new structure of the empire with its provinces, dioceses and prefectures and its officials functioned so well that it hardly needed any imperial attention.

³⁷ For instance, *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.1 (of 325); 1.16.1 (of 315); 1.16.5 (of 329).

THE EFFECTS OF THE REFORMS ON THE CAREERS OF GOVERNORS AND *VICARII*

How are we to characterize a governor in a period when the administrative structures were changing so rapidly? The most important effect of the reforms on the careers of governors is that now new positions were created to govern the units “above” the provinces, that is, the dioceses and prefectures. As a result, in the course of the fourth century a new balance of power between provincial governors, *vicarii* and Praetorian Prefects had to develop.³⁸ Modern scholarship has not yet offered many in-depth analyses of the relationship among these three different types of officials. What has already become clear concerning governors, though, is a shift in the valuation of their position. Whereas during the high Roman empire governorships could be considered the pinnacle of a man’s career (such as the proconsulships of Africa or Asia), in the later Roman empire governorships were typically taken up at the beginning of a man’s career. In tracking those men who became governors in the fourth century, the prosopographical data—as collected in *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* and additionally by scholars in articles and books—show a notable development. The following exploratory prosopographical survey will offer a first attempt to analyze the way in which two types of governors’ trajectories materialized in the course of the fourth century: those in which a governorship proved to be the highest office of a man’s career, and those in which a governorship was merely a stepping-stone to further offices.³⁹ These further offices were those of the *vicarii*, Praetorian Prefects, the Urban Prefects (in the fourth century of Rome or Constantinople) and the ordinary consulship.⁴⁰ Although it would be deceptive to see a hierarchy in these offices, because the careers of late antique officials show that they did not necessarily follow a strict order of the offices, the Praetorian Prefect can be regarded as the most powerful civil official.⁴¹

Before turning to a brief analysis of the two categories of governors, the following needs to be kept in mind. First, a note of caution is in place. The

³⁸ Cf. Migl 1994; Slootjes 2006: 39–43.

³⁹ Thanks to Tijs Gelens and Malgorzata Wilk for their help on collection of the prosopographical data. Cf. Matthews 1975: 13–16.

⁴⁰ On the position of the ordinary consulship versus the suffect consulship, see Chastagnol 1958.

⁴¹ Jones 1964: 374–375; Slootjes 2006: 40.

analysis of the two categories is based on the ancient sources that were left to us. In other words, we need to take into account the possibility of the evidence for governors not being complete or uncertain. We might run the risk of placing individuals in the category of those who only fulfilled governorships, but due to lack of evidence we simply do not know if they might have moved on into higher offices. This factor should not keep us from making the analysis, but should keep us from applying statistics to the analysis as well as from basing the entire analysis on only a few individuals. Fortunately, as will become clear, there is plenty of evidence for many individual governors from the fourth century.

Second, the men who were appointed as governors in the fourth century cannot be seen as a homogeneous group. A complex system of different titles and ranks had arisen which consisted of *praesides*, *correctores*, *consulares* and proconsuls, with the latter being the highest in status.⁴² In terms of rank, by the end of the fourth century, the governors with the titles *praesides*, *correctores* and *consulares* were of the lowest rank which was that of the *clarissimi*.⁴³ Proconsuls and *vicarii* were of the second rank, that is, that of the *spectabiles*, whereas the Praetorian Prefects, the Urban Prefects and the consuls were of the same and highest rank, that is that of the *illustres*.

Let us turn to the exploratory analysis of the governors. First, there is ample evidence for the category of governors who fulfilled one or more governorships but who never went beyond the level of governorships. There are examples of governors who took up two governorships of the same title and rank such as for example Atarbius (*PLRE* 1: 120, Atarbius) who was *praeses* of the province of Euphratensis in the diocese of Oriens in 362–363 and subsequently *praeses* of the province of Macedonia in the diocese of Moesia in 364.⁴⁴ There are also examples of men who held two governorships of the same rank but of different title. Eutherius (*PLRE* 1: 315, Eutherius 2), for instance, was *praeses* of the province of Armenia in the diocese of Pontica in 360 as well as corrector of the province of

⁴² Sootjes 2006: 19, for a schematic overview of ranks and titles of governors in the fourth century.

⁴³ Cf. Sootjes 2006: 19.

⁴⁴ The evidence for Atarbius mostly comes from Lib., *Epp.* 50, 83, 741, 750, 784, 820, 1229, 1404, 1407. Other similar examples of men who held governorships with the same title: Anatolius (*PLRE* 1: 60 (Anatolius 4)); Entrechius (*PLRE* 1: 278–279 (Entrechius 1)); Iulianus (*PLRE* 1: 471 (Iulianus 14)); Leontius (*PLRE* 1:500 (Leontius 9)).

Augustamnica in Aegyptus in 361.⁴⁵ Only rarely did men take up governorships more than three times. With his three governorships (of Egypt, Bithynia and Cilicia) Apellio (*PLRE* 1: 80, Apellio) seems to have been one of those exceptions. Most men with multiple governorship fulfilled those within the same rank, that is, that of *praeses*, corrector or *consularis*, although there is some evidence for a few men who made promotion within their governorships. Virius Audentius Aemilianus (*PLRE* 1: 22, Aemilianus 4) was first *consularis* of Campania in the diocese Italia somewhere before 383, and was subsequently appointed proconsul of Africa in 379/380. Or, Festus (*PLRE* 1: 334–335, Festus 3) was first *consularis* of Syria in Oriens in 365 or 368, before taking up the proconsulship of Asia in 372–378. As to be expected, governors never performed governorships of one province twice. Remarkably, most governors with two governorships carried those offices out even in different dioceses. Of course, it is difficult for us to establish if this was a deliberate policy of the imperial government to keep individuals from gaining too much influence within one region, but it is surely noteworthy.

Second, there is the category of men who performed one or more governorships but then moved on into higher offices. For instance, there is Andronicus (*PLRE* 1: 64–65, Andronicus 3) who was *consularis* of the province of Phoenice in the diocese of Oriens in 360–361 and *consularis* of the province of Bithynia in the diocese of Pontica in 365/366, before being appointed as *vicarius* of the diocese of Thracia somewhere in 365/366 as well.⁴⁶ Or, Flavius Eusebius (*PLRE* 1: 308–309, Eusebius 40) was *consularis* of the province of Hellespontus in the diocese of Asiana in 355, *consularis* of the province Bithynia in the diocese of Pontica in 355/356, and eventually chosen as consul in Constantinople at some point prior to 359. He fulfilled the consulship together with his brother Flavius Hypatius (*PLRE* 1: 448–449, Hypatius 4), the latter then going on to become Urban Prefect of Rome in 379 and Praetorian Prefect of Italia and Illyricum in 382–383. The case of Flavius Eusebius seems illustrative for many governors who moved on into higher offices and of whom we know the names of other family members who performed other (high)

⁴⁵ Cf. Valentinus (*PLRE* 1: 936 (Valentinus 12)).

⁴⁶ See for most evidence on Andronicus, Lib., *Epp.* 127, 150, 151, 153, 156, 158, 159, 166, 169, 175, 183, 184, 189, 192, 195, 198, 204, 216, 225, 230, 234, 245, 271, 272, 1221, 1246, 1272, 1378, 1460; *Orr.* 56 and 62.

offices as well.⁴⁷ In other words, in this second group of governors we seem to have much more evidence for entire families who were involved in the administrative offices of the imperial government. In addition, when the men of this second category performed a second governorship, this second governorship was often a proconsulship before moving on into higher offices. As mentioned above in regard to the first category of governors, this happened only rarely for men for whom the governorships turned out to be their highest offices. Should we then assume that proconsulships—being the governorships with the highest status—were seen as the real stepping-stones toward higher offices? In terms of rank, a proconsulship resulted in a promotion from *clarissimus* to *spectabilis*. As an illustration, the impressive career of Quintus Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius (*PLRE* 1: 640–642, Olybrius 3) shows that he was first *consularis* of Campania in Italia before 361, then proconsul of Africa in 361, before becoming Urban Prefect of Rome in 369–370, then Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum in 378, Praetorian Prefect of Oriens in 378 as well, and finally consul after 379.⁴⁸

Clearly, this is only a first and exploratory analysis of effects of the early fourth-century administrative reforms on the development of governors' careers. A systematic examination of all the evidence for governors of the fourth century should lead us to a better understanding not only of governorships but also of the relationship with the other officials within the administrative structures, in particular the *vicarii* and Praetorian Prefects. The emergence of the two categories of governors seems to have been the consequence of these administrative reforms. In other words, whereas before these reforms a governorship generally used to mark the end and climax of one's career, taken up after a man had been praetor or consul, in the fourth century more opportunities arose for advancement into higher

⁴⁷ Cf. also Caecina Decius Albinus Junior (*PLRE* 1: 35–36 (Albinus 10)); Andronicus (*PLRE* 1: 64–65 (Andronicus 3)); Nicomachus Flavianus (*PLRE* 1: 345–347 (Flavianus 14)); Marcus Ceionius Iulianus (*PLRE* 1: 476 (Iulianus 26)); Quintus Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius (*PLRE* 1: 640–642 (Olybrius 3)); Quintus Aurelius Symmachus (*PLRE* 1: 865–871 (Symmachus 4)); Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus (*PLRE* 1: 876–878 (Tatianus 5)).

⁴⁸ Cf. Lucius Aelius Helvius Dionysius (*PLRE* 1: (Dionysius 260)); Aelius Claudius Dulcitus (*PLRE* 1: 274 (Dulcitus 5)); Nicomachus Flavianus (*PLRE* 1: 345–347 (Flavianus 14)); Marcus Ceionius Iulianus (*PLRE* 1: 476 (Iulianus 26)); Lucius Crepereius Madalianus (*PLRE* 1: 530 (Madalianus)); Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (*PLRE* 1: 651–653 (Orfitus 3)); Saturninus Secundus Salutius (*PLRE* 1: 814–817 (Secundus 3)); Quintus Aurelius Symmachus (*PLRE* 1: 865–871 (Symmachus 4)).

offices. Even though some of these higher offices had existed before, such as the Urban Prefect or the Praetorian Prefect, these higher offices also changed and grew in power and prestige in the fourth century.

CONCLUSION

In regard to the administrative reforms set in motion by Diocletian and Constantine, the age of the sons of Constantine was a dynamic period in which the reforms became intrinsically embedded into the existing administrative structures. Even though the ancient evidence at times is scarce, this chapter has offered a glimpse into the actual effects of the reforms by zooming in on a geographical and legal perspective on dioceses as well as applying a more prosopographical perspective on governors and their careers.

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CHAPTER 10

Imperial Cities Under the Sons of Constantine

Meaghan McEvoy

INTRODUCTION

Ammianus Marcellinus informs us that towards the end of Constantius II's famous visit to the city of Rome in 357, he grew concerned about reports of barbarian raiding elsewhere in his vast empire:

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M. McEvoy (✉)

Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Abteilung für Alte Geschichte, Historisches Seminar, Goethe-Universität,
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

e-mail: meaghan.mcevoy@mq.edu.au

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the emperor desired to remain longer in this most majestic abode of all the world, to enjoy freer repose and pleasure; but he was alarmed by constant trustworthy reports, stating that the Suebi were raiding Raetia and the Quadri Valeria, while the Sarmatians, a tribe most accomplished in brigandage, were laying waste Upper Moesia and Lower Pannonia. Excited by this news, on the thirtieth day after entering Rome he left the city on 29 May, and marched rapidly into Illyricum.¹

Ammianus' report of Constantius' preoccupation with military demands even in the midst of his triumphal visit to Rome in many ways characterises the relationships of Constantine's sons with the imperial cities of their empire. Despite their youth at the time of their full accessions in 337, all three brothers were active, campaigning emperors throughout their reigns, whose residencies in different cities across the empire were dictated in large part by military priorities, priorities in common with their father and indeed Tetrarchic emperors before them. Though the earlier fourth century had witnessed a rare period of calm in relations between the Roman empire and Persia, the military efforts of Constantine I and his rivals and predecessors had frequently (though by no means exclusively) focused on internal competition for the throne.²

Under the Tetrarchs, regional cities such as Trier, Milan, Thessalonica, Antioch and Nicomedia had already seen periods of greater prominence through more frequent imperial use and residency than previously. Lactantius famously wrote of the grand rebuilding project undertaken by Diocletian at Nicomedia: "Here there were basilicas, here a circus, a mint, an arms factory, a house for his wife and one for his daughter ... Such was his incessant mania for making Nicomedia the equal of Rome."³ The city of Rome still remained an ideological focus, and the site of considerable imperial building activity, particularly following the fire which destroyed much of the Forum early in Diocletian's reign, leading to a remodelling of the political heart of the city, including the construction of a new Senate House and the Tetrarchic rostra erected at the eastern end of the Forum.⁴

¹ *Amm. Marc.* 16.10.20–21, trans. Rolfé.

² As Kulikowski points out (2006: 358–359), Constantine's campaigns against northern barbarians in the period 306–312 played an important role in establishing his military credentials as an imperial claimant. See further on Constantine's foreign campaigns Wienand 2012.

³ Lactant., *De mort. pers.* 7. 9–10, trans. Millar. See further Millar 1977: 52; Dey 2015: 33.

⁴ Harries 2012: 39.

But military necessities of the late third and early fourth centuries called for imperial presence in other regions of the empire, and it is in this era that we begin to see references to other major cities as comparable to Rome, as in the comments of Lactantius above.⁵ Similarly, the journey made by Roman senators to the city of Milan upon the occasion of the meeting there of Diocletian and Maximian in 290–291 saw one panegyrist declare that “the seat of imperial power could then appear to be the place to which each emperor had come”.⁶ New palaces were built in the frontier cities frequented by the Tetrarchs, as was the case at Thessalonica and Gamzigrad, grand structures whose dominating size were clearly intended to overawe petitioners seeking admittance to the emperor’s court.⁷ The Tetrarchic attitudes towards the “imperial” cities of their empire, therefore, foreshadowed both the foundation of Constantinople, and the use of multiple major cities as imperial headquarters under Constantine’s sons.

The succession of Constantine’s sons saw a refocus particularly on external problems, in the form of renewed conflict with Persia, and with barbarian groups on the Rhine, although western-based usurpers also became a priority towards the end of the period.⁸ In consequence, the era from 337 to 361 saw imperial residence concentrated on cities which had only rarely served as imperial headquarters for many years previously, but which witnessed a last flourishing of imperial interest under Constantine’s sons before the establishment of the more sedentary courts of non-campaigning emperors in the fifth century and the refocus on the cities of Constantinople and Rome.⁹

In this chapter, the relationships of the emperors Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans with the cities in which they primarily resided will be examined, from the earliest days of their settlement as Caesars under their father’s auspices in different parts of the empire, through the period of joint rule from 337 to 350, and the sole rule of Constantius II from 350 to 361, with his successive Caesars Gallus and Julian. Analysis of these relationships will begin with highlighting the established itineraries

⁵ And see similarly with regard to Trier, *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7) 22.5 (Nixon and Rodgers 1994).

⁶ *Pan. Lat.* 11 (3) 12.2 (trans. Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 96–97). See further Millar 1977: 45.

⁷ Harries 2012: 40; Dey 2015: 33.

⁸ Brown 1999: 168, 192. See also the chapters by Mark Humphries and Michael Kulikowski in this volume.

⁹ See Pfeilschifter 2013 for emperors in Constantinople in the fifth century, and Gillett 2001 and McEvoy 2010 for emperors and Rome in the fifth century.

of the three Augusti in different cities over this period, primarily Antioch, Sirmium, Milan and Trier, the most frequented imperial centres, transformed by the emperor's presence (arguably only temporarily) into "imperial" cities,¹⁰ and the different uses to which these cities were put—as winter quarters between campaigning seasons, ceremonial centres and venues for meetings between emperors, elites and urban populace. Major instances of imperial patronage of these cities in the form of civic and ecclesiastical building projects will be examined, and a final section will consider instances of arguably longer-term imperial relationships with major cities, through the imperial mausolea of Rome and Constantinople constructed or embellished by Constantine's sons. The question of the ongoing symbolic significance under Constantine's sons of these two most famous of imperial cities will be considered: for while neither were frequently used as imperial residences during this period (in contrast with the much-used Antioch), as events and pro-active imperial activity towards them demonstrate, Rome and increasingly Constantinople remained in many ways the ideal imperial cities of the fourth century, their status and their relationships with emperors both intense and sensitive.¹¹

PRINCIPAL IMPERIAL RESIDENCES AS CAESARS AND AUGUSTI

According to the account of Eusebius, Constantine I appointed all of his sons to the rank of Caesar and dispatched them to rule over their share of his empire some years before his death. The eldest of Constantine's sons by Fausta, Constantine II, had been elevated as Caesar in March 317,¹² the next, Constantius II, in November 324, and the youngest, Constans, in December 333.¹³ Multiple imperial rule was nothing new to the Roman empire of the fourth century, following on from the increase in "incidence" of government initiated by Diocletian with his creation of the

¹⁰The *Expositio totius mundi* lists Trier, Sirmium and Antioch as the imperial cities outside of Rome and Constantinople; the absence of the much-frequented Milan here is surprising and suggests the "imperial" status of a city could fluctuate.

¹¹I prefer to employ the term "imperial cities" rather than "capitals" here. See Kelly 2003: 598, who writes: "The sheer plurality and gradations of ruling cities in the fourth century, and the uncertainties with which they regarded their status, makes the term 'capital' misleading".

¹²Elevated at the same time as his elder half-brother Crispus, and the son of the Augustus Licinius. See Barnes 1982: 7.

¹³Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.40.1. See for the dates: Barnes 1982: 8. Also Maraval 2013: 14–15.

Tetrarchic system.¹⁴ This multiplication of imperial rule allowed the Augustus and his Caesars to be seen by, and to reside in and patronise, multiple cities. Constantine envisaged a division of Roman territory between his three sons (and also the fourth Caesar, Dalmatius, killed soon after Constantine's death in 337)¹⁵ and accordingly dispatched each of his Caesars to their allotted territories.¹⁶ Constantine II, to whom the government of Gaul, Spain and Britain was entrusted, was established in the city of Trier in perhaps 328/329.¹⁷ Around the same time or shortly thereafter, the second Caesar, Constantius II, entrusted with the East, was sent to the city of Antioch,¹⁸ and finally Constans, the youngest, was in *c.* 335 (when he was aged at most fifteen years) stationed with his court in the city of Milan, to oversee his territories of Italy and Pannonia.¹⁹ The Augustus Constantine I, meanwhile, continued to reside in his newly founded city of Constantinople.²⁰

While multiple imperial rule was not unusual in the fourth century, the youth of these Caesars at the time of their appointments was,²¹ and this may be why both Eusebius and Libanius, writing of the early appointment of Constantine's sons to high office, spend some time informing their audience of the attendants the Augustus carefully chose for them, and the advice he himself offered them on the duties of rulership. According to Eusebius,

¹⁴ Matthews 1989: 254. Also Smith 2011: 188–189.

¹⁵ On the purge of the Constantinian house in 337, see Burgess 2008, and on the death of Dalmatius Caesar, Marcos 2014. According to Lib., *Or.* 59.48–49, Constantine's successors were forced “to make use of their hands for firmly retaining what was granted to them” when he died, but proved “superior to the crisis”.

¹⁶ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.51.1, though the allotment of Dalmatius is not mentioned here. See further Barnes 1980: 160; Burgess 2008: 7–9; Maraval 2013: 9–22.

¹⁷ Barnes 1982: 84–85; 1993: 218. Also Szidat 2015: 120. The late Caesar Crispus had been stationed here previously.

¹⁸ Barnes 1982: 85–86; Downey 1961: 354. Julian., *Or.* 1.11d–13d, appears to state Constantius was at one stage given charge of the Gallic prefecture in his youth, but if so it may not have been temporarily. See further Barnes 1982: 85.

¹⁹ Barnes 1982: 86–87. The Caesar Dalmatius was to govern the lower Danube, and his court was perhaps centred on Naissus: Barnes 1982: 198; Burgess 2008: 35; and most recently Marcos 2014: 749.

²⁰ Brown 1999: 171.

²¹ On youthful Caesars generally, see McEvoy 2013: 3–8. It was particularly unusual that Constantine equipped each of his young sons with an administration of their own.

an imperial retinue was allocated to each of the sons, soldiers, praetorians, and bodyguards, and military officers of various ranks, generals, centurions, commanders and tribunes whom their father had previously tried for their expertise in war as well as for their loyalty to him.²²

The Caesars' companions were only "godfearing men", so that "like a strong perimeter wall" Constantine protected his sons.²³ Libanius similarly notes that Constantine embarked his sons on the path to emperorship at a very young age, providing them with their own camps and attendants,²⁴ "just as an eagle trains its nestlings for flight".²⁵

Following Constantine I's death in May 337 and the elimination of Dalmatius Caesar, the three brothers Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans met at Pannonia to decide upon a new division of territory, and were jointly acclaimed as Augusti in September 337.²⁶ The revised territorial division saw little change to Constantine's original plan except the splitting of the territory of Dalmatius between the two younger brothers, Constantius and Constans.²⁷ Each brother then returned to their primary residences of Trier (Constantine II), Antioch (Constantius II) and Milan or perhaps Naissus (Constans).²⁸ The three young emperors were all military campaigners, in keeping with their immediate predecessors, as their movements over the following years reflect.²⁹ The imperial itineraries of the years of rule by Constantine's sons (337–361) have been carefully established in detailed studies first by Otto Seeck and more recently by T.D. Barnes.³⁰ Only an overview is required here therefore.

²²Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.51.3 (trans. Cameron and Hall 1999: 173).

²³Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.52.3. Similarly 4.52.1; and Julian., *Or.* 1.14a. Also Barnes 1982: 131; Harries 2012: 185; McLynn 2006: 242.

²⁴Lib., *Or.* 59.37–40.

²⁵Lib., *Or.* 59.43 (trans. Dodgeon in Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 173). Libanius, writing post-340 and the *damnatio memoriae* of Constantine II, mentions only two sons of Constantine I: Constantius II and Constans. See also on the brothers' education: Maraval 2013: 10–14; and, on the military training of the Caesars, see Marcos 2014: 757–760.

²⁶On the dating of their acclamation see Burgess 2008: 29–30. Also Maraval 2013: 23–37.

²⁷Julian., *Or.* 1.19a; Barnes 1982: 85–87. Cf. Zonar. 13.5; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.34; Anonymus Valesianus, *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* 6.35.

²⁸Brown 1999: 172; Burgess 2008: 10, 35.

²⁹Libanius emphasises the military involvements of the brothers from a very early age: for example, Lib., *Or.* 59.44–45. Julian emphasises similarly Constantius' early military activities: for example, Julian., *Or.* 1.11d–12b. For their ages upon Constantine's death in 337, see Burgess 2008: 40.

³⁰Seeck 1919; Barnes 1980, 1982, 1993.

Our sources indicate that the eldest brother, Constantine II, continued to reside in Trier after 337 until his premature death in 340,³¹ when he invaded the neighbouring territories of Constans, and was killed by the latter's armies.³²

Constantius II, established at Antioch with his court in the early 330s, also continued to reside in the city designated for him by his father after 337. Constantius' residency in Antioch in fact marks the most consistent imperial residency in any city throughout this period: throughout most of the 340s until the death of Constans in 350 (which necessitated a prolonged stay by Constantius in the West), Constantius made Antioch his principal residence, his base for the war against Persia which erupted on his father's death.³³ As Libanius noted, Constantius usually spent his winters in Antioch and his summers on campaign in Mesopotamia.³⁴ Antioch had long acted as a military base for Roman campaigns on the eastern frontier,³⁵ and Libanius' *Oration* 11 describes the bustle and preparation that went on in the city as the emperor prepared to lead his army out each year:

this land of ours is the one that rose above the emergency with its abundance and collected the forces to its bosom and sent forth the entire army, when the time called. For there flowed to it, like rivers to the sea, all the soldiers, all the bowmen and horsemen and the horses, both of the fighting men and those carrying burdens, and every camel and every band of soldiers, so that the ground was covered with men standing and men sitting.³⁶

³¹ It was from Trier that Constantine II wrote his letter restoring bishop Athanasius of Alexandria to his see: Athanasius, *Apol. c. Arian.* 87.4–7; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.3; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.2.

³² Barnes 1982: 84–85. For the most detailed (but late) accounts of Constantine II's attack on his brother's territories, see Zonar. 13.5 and *Artemii passio* 9–10. For recent modern analyses, see Bleckmann 2003; Maraval 2013: 42–44, and now Lewis in this volume.

³³ Barnes 1993: 35; 1982: 85–86; Brown 1999: 201. Also Downey 1961: 353, 355; Harries 2012: 215; Lane Fox 1986: 239; Wienand 2015: 428–429.

³⁴ Lib., *Or.* 18.206–207.

³⁵ Henck 2001: 293.

³⁶ Lib., *Or.* 11.177–178, trans. Downey. See also Downey 1961: 356; Matthews 1989: 72. As Matthews points out, Libanius' account seems highly idealised in comparison with the problems attendant on the presence of a large army in the city as reported by Ammianus. See further on the impact of Constantius' military preparations in Antioch: Wienand 2015: 429.

Antioch, according to Libanius, was like a loved one to the emperor, “when he is absent from it, it is as though from his native land” and indeed “he has not gone elsewhere, except in so far as warfare has compelled him to, but in truth has spent the pleasantest part of his time here, taking his pleasure as though in the arms of a loved one”.³⁷ Yet Constantius did also travel to Constantinople for brief visits on a few occasions during the late 330s and 340s—such as for his father’s funeral in 337 and in 342 following urban unrest surrounding the ongoing disputed election to the see of Constantinople.³⁸

The movements of Constans from 337 until his death in 350 at the hands of the usurper Magnentius are more difficult to establish.³⁹ Following the brothers’ meeting in Pannonia in 337, Barnes suggests Constans may have resided at Naissus in Illyricum.⁴⁰ After the death of Constantine II and Constans’ acquisition of his eldest brother’s territories he seems to have passed most of his time in Italy or Gaul, and what meagre sources there are record him in Italy most frequently in the cities of Milan and Aquileia,⁴¹ while in Gaul he presumably used Trier as his headquarters,⁴² and shortly before his death his is also attested at Sirmium.⁴³

The death of Constans in January 350 left Constantius II as the sole legitimate Augustus, while the usurpation of Magnentius which had brought about his brother’s death forced a change in Constantius’ military priorities, and hence the cities he used as his headquarters. In the course of a three-year campaign in the West against Magnentius, following

³⁷ Lib., *Or.* 11.180.

³⁸ See Barnes 1993: 219–224; Henck 2001: 293, 299; Vanderspoel 1995: 72. See further below on both episodes. It has also been suggested that Constantius celebrated vicennialia games in Constantinople in late 343: see Barnes 1993: 84–85, 220, 312 n. 18.

³⁹ On the paucity of the source material for Constans’ activities, see Brown 1999: 177. Maraval 2013: 46, sees him as an “itinerant” emperor. See also Szidat 2015: 120–121.

⁴⁰ Barnes 1980: 161. Brown 1999: 177–178 n. 6 observes this is plausible but not provable on the basis of available evidence.

⁴¹ Although Constans was probably in residence at Milan from 335 to 337 and is occasionally placed there again by surviving laws (e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.1 (June 340); *Cod. Theod.* 9.7.3 (Dec 342); *Cod. Theod.* 10.14.2 (June 348)), he does not seem otherwise to have spent much time in the city: Brown 1999: 180–181.

⁴² Eunap., *VS* 490, refers to Constans making his headquarters in Gaul. See further Barnes 1980: 161; Brown 1999: 178.

⁴³ Barnes 1993: 225; Brown 1999: 178 n. 10, on the basis of *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.2, 8.7.3 (27 May 349). Brown in fact suggests Constans spent the majority of the last five years of his reign in Pannonia: Brown 1999: 180.

the battle of Mursa in Pannonia in September 351, the usurper was pushed first back into Italy, and then as Constantius established his base at Milan in November 352, Magnentius retreated to Gaul, committing suicide the following summer at Lyons. Constantius spent the winter of 353/354 in Arles,⁴⁴ and the following year returned to Milan, which remained his headquarters until early 357. Constantius' residence in Milan during the 350s represents the most prolonged use of this city as an imperial residence prior to the reign of Valentinian II.⁴⁵ In April 357 Constantius II made his famous visit to Rome, and after thirty days in the old imperial capital, he departed, as we have already heard, to begin his summer military campaign in Illyricum, using Sirmium as his base until 359.⁴⁶ He spent the winter of 359/360 in Constantinople, and returned to Antioch for the winter of 360/361.⁴⁷

This survey offers a picture of the cities which featured most prominently as imperial centres under Constantine's sons: primarily Antioch and Milan, and less securely attested but certainly used on occasion: Arles, Trier, Naissus and Sirmium.⁴⁸ Notably neither of the most famous "imperial cities"—Rome and Constantinople—appears frequently in these records, indeed only Constantius II can certainly be said to have visited both, and even in his case, the visits were fleeting.⁴⁹ The use, or lack of use, of Rome as an imperial residence in the late Roman period has long been a focus of modern scholarship. Scholars have rightly emphasised that from

⁴⁴ On the renaming of Arles as Constantia after 353, see Burgess 1999: 278–279, which arguably again suggests the ephemeral status of some cities as "imperial".

⁴⁵ Brown 1999: 181–182. Also Henck 2001: 301. On Milan's history as an imperial city, see Christie 2011: 150–152.

⁴⁶ On the visit, see further below. For his usage of Sirmium from 357 until 359, see Barnes 1993: 222–223.

⁴⁷ Barnes 1993: 223–224.

⁴⁸ The decline in Trier's usage as an imperial headquarters under the sons of Constantine is notable however—despite its appearance in the *Expositio totius mundi* as the "seat of the emperor" (ch. 58), after the death of Constantine II, Constans can only be located there with certainty on three occasions (in 342, 343 and 345) and Constantius is never recorded as present in the city—see Barnes 1993: 218–228; Brown 1999: 178–180. Trier was barely used again by an emperor until the reign of Valentinian I. See further on Trier under Constantine II and Constans, Wightman 1970: 59–60.

⁴⁹ Barnes 1975 has argued for Constans making a visit to Rome between June 340 and June 341, but this cannot be attested. Constantius II spent thirty days in Rome on his visit in 357, from 28 April until 29 May. He is known to have visited Constantinople on a number of occasions (see above) and may have wintered in Constantinople in 343/344, 349/350 and 359/360 (Henck 2001: 293; Barnes 1993: 219–224).

the third century onwards, Roman emperors were only rarely to be found in the ancient capital, and carried with them the business of government, such as issuing laws and making appointments, as they led their armies on campaign.⁵⁰ Recent scholarship has also highlighted the rarity of imperial residence in Constantinople in the period immediately following Constantine's death,⁵¹ particularly in contrast to Constantius II's near-continuous residency in Antioch from the mid-330s and throughout the 340s.⁵² Indeed, Croke describes Constantine's city as being treated by his successors as akin to "a transit camp" as they progressed between the eastern and western boundaries of their empire.⁵³

These general patterns hold true for Constantine's sons, yet while Rome and Constantinople were little frequented by them, the symbolic significance of these cities as focal points of dynastic loyalty did not diminish, and in the case of Constantinople can be argued to have steadily increased between 337 and 361, particularly through the efforts and attentions of Constantius II. As military emperors, the primary use by Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans of cities such as Trier, Antioch and Milan as the centres most suited to their respective campaigns comes as no surprise.⁵⁴ But the relationships of Constantine I's sons and the key imperial cities of their realms were far more complex than those based on military necessity alone. The importance of staging legitimising imperial ceremonial (particularly after serious challenges to imperial authority), bestowing patronage and responding appropriately to urban unrest in major cities was well recognised by these brother-emperors, while the importance of preserving and promoting dynastic links to the cities of Rome and Constantinople was conspicuously represented by the presence there of peripheral members of the imperial family and the building or renovation of Constantinian mausolea. In general, the majority of our evidence regarding imperial cities under Constantine's sons inevitably centres on the longest-reigning and best-documented of those sons, Constantius II; yet glimpses of his brothers' activities do emerge on occasion.

⁵⁰ E.g. Millar 1977; Mayer 2002.

⁵¹ Though the city had acted as Constantine's main residence from the time of its dedication in 330 onwards, and had been used by the emperor as military base from which to launch campaigns on the Danube: Brown 1999: 170. On the development of Constantinople as an imperial city, see Dagron 1974; Krautheimer 1983: 41–68.

⁵² Brown 1999: 200; Henck 2001: 293.

⁵³ Croke 2010: 241.

⁵⁴ Matthews 1989: 253; Hunt 1997: 5.

IMPERIAL VISITS AND CELEBRATIONS

Surely the most famous of all interactions of a Constantinian emperor with an imperial city was the adventus of Constantius II to Rome in 357, vividly described by Ammianus. On 28 April the emperor, by then the sole surviving son of Constantine I, entered the city amidst lavish celebrations. Ammianus, whose critical account chides Constantius for thus marking his victory in civil war and triumphing over the loss of Roman blood rather than foreign,⁵⁵ describes how the emperor,

while the standards preceded him on each side ... sat alone upon a golden car in the resplendent blaze of various precious stones, whose mingled glitter seemed to form a sort of second daylight. And behind the manifold others that preceded him he was surrounded by dragons, woven out of purple thread and bound to the golden and jewelled tops of spears, with wide mouths open to the breeze and hence hissing as if roused by anger, and leaving their tails winding in the wind.⁵⁶

Beside him marched twin lines of fully armed infantry mingled with armoured cavalry,⁵⁷ and the Roman crowd hailed Constantius Augustus, while the emperor himself remained impassive:

he kept the gaze of his eyes straight ahead, and turned his face neither to right nor to left, but (as if he were a lay figure) neither did he nod when the wheel jolted nor was he even seen to spit, or to wipe or rub his face or nose, or move his hands about.⁵⁸

Once within the city however, Constantius' behaviour changed: he addressed the senators in the Senate House, the populace from the tribunal, and when holding equestrian games "took delight in the sallies of the commons".⁵⁹

Constantius' adventus to Rome is one of our best surviving descriptions of the interaction between an emperor and his subjects en masse in

⁵⁵ Amm. Marc. 16.10.1–2.

⁵⁶ Amm. Marc. 16.10.6–7, trans. Rolfe.

⁵⁷ Amm. Marc. 16.10.8.

⁵⁸ Amm. Marc. 16.10.9–11, trans. Rolfe.

⁵⁹ Amm. Marc. 16.10.13–14.

Late Antiquity and has been repeatedly analysed by modern scholars.⁶⁰ It is also a crucial moment in our understanding of the importance to Constantius II of paying appropriate attention to imperial cities. Constantius' visit to Rome is the only securely attested visit of any of Constantine's sons to the city. Constantius had been based in the West since 351, and after the final defeat of Magnentius in 353, had settled in Milan for several years, as noted above. This settlement will have meant some members of the senatorial aristocracy of Rome will have already met with Constantius before 357, travelling to his court themselves.⁶¹ But the lack of any imperial visit to Rome prior to April 357, and the lavish scale on which it was staged when it did finally occur, gives some indication of the complexities of an emperor's visit to the old imperial capital.

Though Ammianus apparently found it unseemly, it was doubtless important that a city which had not seen a legitimate emperor for decades and was now faced with one who had recently triumphed in civil war should be suitably impressed by his military presence, wealth and grandeur.⁶² As Matthews has highlighted, much of Constantius' behaviour at Rome (as reported by Ammianus) reflects the importance of an emperor adapting his behaviour to his context—and in the old imperial capital this adaptability arguably mattered more than anywhere else.⁶³

Although we have only one account of an imperial *adventus* to Rome during these years, we do possess brief reports of other such entrances to imperial cities, but again, our evidence relates generally to Constantius. Following his campaign against the Lentienses in 355 for instance, Ammianus writes that once the battle was over, “the emperor returned in

⁶⁰For a detailed and thorough account see Matthews 1989: 231–238; also MacCormack 1981: 39–45; Smith 2011: 210–213; Humphries 2015: 158–160; Salzman 1990: 218–223; Maraval 2013: 141–149; Henck 2007: 148–149.

⁶¹See McCormick 1986: 40, who notes that at least one embassy from Rome had travelled to Constantius' court in Sirmium in late 352 to congratulate him on his victory; his residency at Milan will have made their access to him still easier; see also Harries 2012: 200–201. Cf. Edbrooke 1976: 40–41, who seems to argue Constantius' visit initiated real contact between his court and the Roman Senate, but did not lead to any improvement in relations between the two.

⁶²Matthews 1989: 233. Also Curran 2000: 191; Humphries 2015: 156–158, and particularly on the previous relations between Rome and the usurper Magnentius: Humphries 2015: 158–164.

⁶³Matthews 1989: 234–235, 237. Also Henck 2007: 148–149. See now for further discussion of this episode Flower 2015.

triumph and joy to Milan, to pass the winter”.⁶⁴ And a similar occasion is reported in autumn 358, when after a campaign against the Sarmatians and Quadi, Constantius “returned in triumphal pomp to Sirmium”.⁶⁵ Further lavish festivities in Milan took place for the elevation of Julian as Caesar in 355. Ammianus reports on Constantius’ calling together of his soldiers, taking Julian by the hand and presenting him to them, surrounded by the eagles and the standards.⁶⁶ Upon the acclamation of the soldiers, Julian was taken up to sit in the emperor’s carriage and conducted to the palace, and soon after married to Constantius’ sister Helena—all once again, in the imperial city of Milan.⁶⁷

The staging of imperial triumphal celebrations, and of important dynastic events, was a significant means of fostering dynastic loyalty in the imperial cities frequented by these emperors. So too was the staging of games—as we have heard Constantius II did in Rome in 357, and as he also undertook at Arles in November 353, not long after the defeat of Magnentius and in celebration of his own tricennalia, whereupon “he gave entertainments in the theatre and the circus with ostentatious magnificence”.⁶⁸ In early 361 Constantius II is attested attending games in the circus in the city of Antioch,⁶⁹ occasions which provided vital opportunities for interaction between emperor and populace, a consideration the emperor Julian at a later date would overlook in his difficult relations with the Antiochenes.⁷⁰

The city of Milan witnessed Constantius’ celebrations for his assumption of the consulship in both 353 and 354,⁷¹ just as Antioch had in 346.⁷² And the cycle of imperial festivities marked in Rome alone during the reign of Constantius II—festivities marked, it should be noted, almost always in the absence of the emperor—is reflected in the remarkable codex

⁶⁴ Amm. Marc. 15.4.13, trans. Rolfe.

⁶⁵ Amm. Marc. 17.13.33. See Barnes 1993: 222–223.

⁶⁶ Amm. Marc. 15.8.4–8.

⁶⁷ Amm. Marc. 15.8.17–20.

⁶⁸ Amm. Marc. 14.5.1–3. See further Matthews 1989: 233.

⁶⁹ Amm. Marc. 21.6.2–3. Constantius’ final marriage in 361, to Faustina (*PLRE* 1: 326) presumably also took place at Antioch.

⁷⁰ As has often been observed—for example, Henck 2007: 151; also Brown 1999: 194–195. On the particular development of ceremonial culture at Antioch under Constantius’ rule, see Wienand 2015: 429–430.

⁷¹ McLynn 1994: 20. Also Bagnall et al. 1987: 240–243.

⁷² Wienand 2015: 430. Also Bagnall et al. 1987: 227.

calendar preserved by the Chronographer of 354.⁷³ As Salzman observes, of ninety-eight days of celebration marked in the codex calendar in honour of the imperial cult, some sixty-nine days related to the anniversaries and achievements of the House of Constantine alone.⁷⁴ The emperor did not have to be present, naturally, for an imperial city to demonstrate its loyalty—but clearly such demonstrations were all the more spectacular when he was, while the opportunities for local elites and lobby groups to gain privileges from the emperor depended greatly on proximity to the imperial presence.⁷⁵ As noted below, imperial presence at the inauguration of church councils and dedication of churches also provided further occasions for emperor and populace to celebrate together.⁷⁶

Constantius II seems to have been adept at maintaining friendly relations with the urban populace of the cities he visited and in which he based his court—as his behaviour at the games in Rome allows us to glimpse.⁷⁷ Henck has also highlighted Constantius' good relations with the populace of Antioch, in stark contrast to those of his Caesar Gallus—who once ordered the execution of the entire Antiochene curia⁷⁸—and the emperor Julian's famously antagonistic relationship with the inhabitants of the city.⁷⁹ Yet despite Constantius' apparent care, episodes of serious urban unrest did occur—such as at several tense moments during the long-running dispute over the see of Constantinople, which resulted in the lynching of Constantius' *magister equitum* Hermogenes in 342 when the latter was sent to remove the orthodox bishop Paul.⁸⁰ The ecclesiastical historians report on the immediate response of Constantius to the death of Hermogenes:

⁷³ See Salzman 1990: esp. 193–231, for the fourth-century context, and particularly on imperial cult celebrations, 131–146. Also Curran 2000: 221–224.

⁷⁴ Salzman 1990: 131–132.

⁷⁵ Matthews 1989: 254. For a case of such lobbying of the emperor in the circus at Rome, see Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 2.14, with comments by Henck 2007: 150, and the caveat that it is not clear whether Constantius was present at the time (n. 27).

⁷⁶ See discussion below.

⁷⁷ Henck 2007: 149–150.

⁷⁸ Amm. Marc. 14.7.1–2; also Lib., *Or.* 1.96. See Matthews 1989: 257; Henck 2007: 147, and generally on Gallus' rule in Antioch, see Downey 1961: 362–368.

⁷⁹ Henck 2007: 156.

⁸⁰ A detailed account is given by Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.13; and similarly Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.7. Also mentioned at Amm. Marc. 14.10.1–2. On the dispute generally, see Barnes 1993: 212–217; McLynn 1992: 23–26; Henck 2007: 154–155; and most recently Skinner 2015.

The emperor had no sooner received this intelligence than he took horse to Constantinople, in order to punish the people. They, however, went to meet him with tears and supplications, and induced him to desist from his purpose. He deprived them of about half of the corn which his father, Constantine, had granted them annually from the tributes of Egypt.⁸¹

Constantius' rushing to the scene attests to the importance he placed on urban affairs in the city,⁸² while his halving of Constantinople's grain supply was perhaps important as a mark of imperial displeasure rather than as a measure which significantly harmed the city's economic growth.⁸³ Yet with a few exceptions such as this, Constantius' relations with the imperial cities under his rule appear to have been untroubled by major instances of urban unrest.⁸⁴

PATRONAGE: CIVIC BUILDINGS

Imperial interest in a city could take many forms, but one of the most conspicuous and enduring was through buildings.⁸⁵ As a number of recent publications have pointed out, the considerable building activities of Constantius have been largely ignored by ancient and modern historians alike, in the former case perhaps due to a disinclination to attribute such benefactions to an "Arian" emperor.⁸⁶ Yet Constantius' extensive civic benefactions were clearly a major part of his demonstration of care for the cities of his empire.⁸⁷

Antioch, Constantius' principal residence for the first half of his reign, benefitted particularly from his generosity.⁸⁸ Indeed, in his first panegyric

⁸¹ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.7, trans. Walford. Similarly Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.13.

⁸² Skinner 2015: 3.

⁸³ McLynn 1992: 25, describes it as a "cosmetic cut"; also Brown 1999: 201–202; and Skinner 2015: 2, but cf. Dagron 1974: 535.

⁸⁴ Henck 2007: 151–156 explores a few further examples of urban unrest under Constantius. See also McLynn 1994: 20.

⁸⁵ Johnson 2006: 278.

⁸⁶ Henck 2001: 279–280, 284. Confusion over the name of a particular benefactor—between Constantine and any of his sons—is also likely to have been a factor (Henck 2001: 284). On the religious politics of Constantius II, see the study by Diefenbach 2012.

⁸⁷ Henck 2001: 280 argues too that many of Constantius' building initiatives were undertaken while the emperor was present at the location.

⁸⁸ See generally on Constantius and Antioch: Downey 1961: 355–373; and now also Henck 2001: 293.

to Constantius, Julian declared that the emperor had bestowed so many benefits on Antioch and so transformed it, that the citizens of the city had begun to call it Antiochia Constantia in his honour.⁸⁹ Julian refers to porticoes and fountains built in the city by Constantius, while according to Libanius the city was a perpetual building site through this period.⁹⁰ The most significant civic building work undertaken by Constantius II at Antioch was the harbour built at Seleucia Pieria in 346, described by Libanius as “a harbour hewn from the rock at a cost of as much gold as the Pactolus did not treasure up for Croesus”.⁹¹ This harbour will have conferred economic benefits on the city through furthering trade, but, perhaps most importantly for Constantius, will have improved still further the suitability of Antioch as a military base for the eastern frontier, with the harbour enabling the movement of men and supplies to and from the city.⁹²

Although we know of no public buildings attributable to Constantius in Rome, his laws on the maintenance and inspection of monuments in the city attest to his awareness and interest in such activities as a form of imperial presence.⁹³ Similarly, following his visit of 357 to Rome, Constantius famously bestowed an obelisk to be set up in the Circus Maximus,⁹⁴ a signal honour since no other city in the empire possessed two obelisks at this point.⁹⁵

It was the city of Constantinople however, which arguably benefitted most of all from the generosity of Constantius II. As a number of scholars have pointed out, Constantinople upon the death of Constantine I remained something of an anomaly—its long-term function unclear and its administrative structure still largely undeveloped.⁹⁶ For all that he did not spend much time in the city (though still more, it should be noted,

⁸⁹ Julian., *Or.* 1.41a. See also Downey 1961: 356. However, Henck 2001: 297 observes that we should treat this statement with caution, since the name is nowhere else attested.

⁹⁰ Julian., *Or.* 1.41a; Lib., *Or.* 11.227. See further Henck 2001: 295.

⁹¹ Lib., *Or.* 11.263–264. Also Jer., *Chron.* s.a. 346.

⁹² Downey 1961: 361; Henck 2001: 293–295.

⁹³ E.g. *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.2 (349). Constantius’ dedication of a statue to the consul designate Eugenius (*LSA* 314, ed. Machado) in the Forum of Trajan in c. 349 also attests to his consciousness of the importance of Rome in the forging of imperial-senatorial connections.

⁹⁴ *Amm. Marc.* 16.10.17; *Amm. Marc.* 17.4.1. On the obelisk and its inscription, see further Henck 2001: 281; Kelly 2003: 603–606; Humphries 2015: 159; Kelly 2008: 225–230; Westall 2015: 234–237.

⁹⁵ Henck 2001: 282. Constantius’ inscription also suggested his father had intended to send the obelisk to Constantinople, but he had decided to send it to Rome instead.

⁹⁶ E.g. Brown 1999: 200–201; Moser 2018.

than he had spent in Rome), Constantius' efforts from 337 to 361—and particularly from the 350s onwards—enhanced the status and the long-term prospects of his father's city.⁹⁷ Indeed, according to Themistius, addressing Constantius:

when almost all men thought that the city's good fortune would die along with your father, you did not permit or allow this, nor have you made the city conscious of the change, but, if truth be told, have generated a great consciousness of your improvement. For not only did you preserve intact the inheritance of your father, but you increased and augmented it, not resting content with what you received from him but making further additions on your own behalf, and engaging in a noble rivalry with the founder as to who could surpass the other in his benefactions.⁹⁸

As Henck writes, Constantius' passion for building combined with his filial *pietas* at Constantinople saw him both completing his father's works and beginning his own.⁹⁹ Constantius was responsible for commencing construction of the *Thermae Constantianae* (finished in the 420s), and was credited with finding new sources of water for the city,¹⁰⁰ as well as constructing public granaries (the *Horrea Constantiana*) in the harbour area.¹⁰¹ According to Themistius, Constantius built a covered colonnade in the city as well as a public library.¹⁰²

PATRONAGE: ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS

It would be the ecclesiastical benefactions and enhancements made by the sons of Constantine, however, which would most mark their relationships with the cities of their empire. According to the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen, all of Constantine's sons were as zealous as their father in protecting the churches: "The greatest possible care was bestowed upon the houses of prayer; those which had been defaced by time were repaired, and

⁹⁷Dagron 1974: 124–146; Mango 1986; Harries 2012: 200. It was under Constantius in 359 that the proconsul of Constantinople was upgraded to the status of Urban Prefect, also on a par with Rome—see *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 359; Dagron 1974: 215–239.

⁹⁸Them., *Or.* 3.47a–b, trans. Heather and Moncur 2001: 133–134.

⁹⁹Henck 2001: 284.

¹⁰⁰*Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 427. Also Brown 1999: 206–207; Vanderspoel 1995: 98–99.

¹⁰¹See further Brown 1999: 209. Also Mango 1986: 121; Harries 2012: 200.

¹⁰²Them., *Or.* 4.58b–c; and *Or.* 4.59d–61d. See further Henck 2001: 285–286.

others were erected in a style of extraordinary magnificence.”¹⁰³ As McLynn has noted, the three young Augusti came to power at a time when great new cathedrals were being built across the Roman empire, often with imperial support,¹⁰⁴ while the rivalry which quickly emerged between Constantine I’s sons after 337 expressed itself in “competitive demonstrations of Christian piety”.¹⁰⁵ Such competition may be seen beginning in the immediate aftermath of Constantine’s I death, in Constantine II’s personal initiative of restoring Athanasius of Alexandria to his see with the claim of fulfilling his father’s intentions,¹⁰⁶ while, as has been observed, the personal appearance of the emperor himself at public church services (such as Constans’ attendance at Easter services in the then uncompleted cathedral at Aquileia in 345) asserted his own piety while also building on his relationship with the Christian clergy and populace of the city.¹⁰⁷

But the church building or embellishments undertaken by Constantine’s sons were a longer-term expression of their faith and the emphasis on the Christian life of the imperial cities under their rule. Inevitably the majority of our secure evidence relates again to Constantius, and as Cyril of Jerusalem declared this emperor was conspicuous for his “customary *philanthropia* for the holy churches”.¹⁰⁸ But in fact the question of which emperor—Constantius or Constans—was responsible for certain imperially sponsored Christian building at Rome (and to a lesser degree Milan) continues to be debated by scholars.

As mentioned above, Constans attended the Easter service in an as-yet unconsecrated cathedral in Aquileia in 345, and may well have been involved in its construction.¹⁰⁹ The imperial city of Trier too received a new cathedral in the first half of the fourth century, begun under

¹⁰³ Sozom., *Hist. Eccl.* 3.17.3, trans. Walford.

¹⁰⁴ McLynn 2006: 244.

¹⁰⁵ McLynn 2006: 245.

¹⁰⁶ Athanasius, *Apol. c. Arian.* 87. 4–7; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.3; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.2.

¹⁰⁷ A measure even Julian thought worthwhile in 360 while on the march against Constantius II (Amm. Marc. 21.2.5; see McLynn 2006: 246). As McLynn 2006: 244, points out, Athanasius does not mention the presence of Constantine II in church services at Trier between 335 and 337 during the bishop’s period of exile in the city, but this may be due to the *damnatio memoriae* suffered by Constantine II after 340.

¹⁰⁸ *Catecheses of Cyril of Jerusalem* 17. 33. See also Kleinbauer 2006: 130.

¹⁰⁹ Athanasius, *Apol. ad Const.* 15.

Constantine I and presumably completed under Constans.¹¹⁰ At Milan, where both Constans in the late 330s and 340s and Constantius in the 350s would base their courts for significant periods, much uncertainty surrounds the question of to whom the initiative for certain ecclesiastical buildings belongs. The mid-fourth-century cathedral dedicated to St Thecla in Milan (the remains of which can still be seen beneath the Duomo) may have been begun under Constans and completed by Constantius II, its lavish materials clearly suggesting an imperial sponsor.¹¹¹ A still more uncertain history surrounds the building of the basilica of San Lorenzo and the attached chapel of Sant’Aquilino—generally believed to have been built as an imperial mausoleum.¹¹² The scale and materials of the building, as with the cathedral, suggest an imperial benefactor—still more so does the use of spolia from the nearby Milan amphitheatre in the foundations of Sant’Aquilino, a re-use of materials which could only have occurred with imperial permission.¹¹³ Yet as Krautheimer long ago pointed out, imperial backing could have come at any time between 340 and 402, when Milan served as an imperial residence,¹¹⁴ and the question of for whom the mausoleum could have been intended (on which see further below) remains impossible to answer with any certainty on the basis of the available evidence.

The city of Antioch also received major ecclesiastical buildings at the hand of the emperor Constantine and his dynasty. At Epiphany 341, the dedication of the city’s new cathedral, the “Golden Octagon” took place, in the presence of Constantius II himself, whose involvement was recorded in an inscription.¹¹⁵ The dedication also marked the beginning of a church council, and Socrates informs us regarding the Golden Octagon, that “Constantine, the father of the Augusti, had commenced [it], and [it] had been completed by his son Constantius in the tenth year after its

¹¹⁰Johnson 2006: 291; Wightman 1970: 59; Gem 2013: 63; Millar 1977: 45–46; Lenski 2016: 188–190. Work on the palace at Trier is also likely to have been completed under Constans: Fontaine 2003: 131.

¹¹¹Krautheimer 1983: 74–77. Also Henck 2001: 300; McLynn 1994: 28–29.

¹¹²See for discussion, Johnson 2009: 157.

¹¹³Johnson 2009: 165–166.

¹¹⁴Krautheimer 1983: 88, and generally on the church of San Lorenzo, Krautheimer 1983: 81–92.

¹¹⁵The inscription is quoted by Malalas at *Chronicle* 326b. See further Downey 1961: 342–349; Johnson 2006: 292–293; McLynn 2006: 244; Henck 2001: 295–296; Kleinbauer 2006: 126–127.

foundations were laid".¹¹⁶ The plan to build the church was probably launched in the mid-late 320s, and continued during Constantius' residence in the city both as Caesar and later Augustus.¹¹⁷

It is the question of which Constantinian emperor bears responsibility for the construction of the basilica of St Peter's on the Vatican in Rome which has perhaps aroused most debate among scholars recently. While some scholars attribute the building to Constantine I,¹¹⁸ lately others have considered his sons more likely candidates for initiating the building of the basilica—although the question of which of his sons—Constans or Constantius II—launched its construction remains hotly debated. Constans has been argued for by Bowersock, Gem and Logan,¹¹⁹ while Westall has now made a concerted (but still unconfirmable) case for ultimate responsibility lying with Constantius. Continuation or modification of the basilica by Constantius would certainly fit with the emperor's interest in the city in the 350s (and we could hardly be surprised if Ammianus omitted to mention it).¹²⁰

In Constantinople similar problems of attribution surround the major ecclesiastical buildings of the period, where it is very difficult to distinguish between the works of Constantine I and Constantius II.¹²¹ We do know that the first cathedral, the Hagia Sophia, was dedicated in February 360, and in the presence of Constantius II himself. The *Chronicon Paschale* informs us that:

At the inauguration, the emperor Constantius Augustus presented many dedications, great gold and silver treasures, and many gemmed and gold-threaded cloths for the holy altar; in addition also, for the doors of the church diverse golden curtains, and for the outer entrances varied gold-threaded ones; so he lavishly bestowed many gifts at that time on the entire clergy, and on the order of virgins and widows and on the hospices. And for the sustenance of the aforementioned and of the beggars and orphans, and pris-

¹¹⁶ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.8. Also Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.5. See also Downey 1961: 348–349, 358–359; Lenski 2016: 188.

¹¹⁷ Kleinbauer 2006: 127.

¹¹⁸ For example, recently Johnson 2006: 286–287; Hunt 2003: 113; Krautheimer 1983: 23. Westall argues that no contemporary evidence convincingly links Constantine I with the building of St Peter's basilica: Westall 2015: 206, 213. See however Liverani 2015, who attributes the initiation of construction to Constantine, and now also Lenski 2016: 182–187 for further discussion.

¹¹⁹ Bowersock 2002: 215–217; Gem 2013: 63; Logan 2011: 44–46.

¹²⁰ Westall 2015. On Ammianus' silences see Kelly 2003. See also on the identification of the Vatican with the Constantinian dynasty: Curran 2000: 130.

¹²¹ Henck 2001: 290–291.

oners, he added a corn allocation of greater size than that which his father Constantine had bestowed.¹²²

While even the sources disagree over whether Constantine or Constantius began the construction, the earliest extant account attributes it to Constantius.¹²³ It has been suggested that a sense of filial piety underlay the building activities of Constantius at both Rome and Constantinople especially,¹²⁴ and this brings us to perhaps the most significant ecclesiastical construction of the Constantinian dynasty at Constantinople—the Apostoleion.

LONGER-TERM IMPERIAL PRESENCE: IMPERIAL MAUSOLEA

Arguably the building of a dynastic imperial mausoleum constitutes, more than any other construction, a long-term imperial commitment to a city. The period 337–361 is framed by two imperial funerals—those of Constantine I and of Constantius II—both at Constantinople, as they were laid to rest in the Apostoleion, the imperial mausoleum complex developed by both father and son. Constantine had died at Nicomedia in May 337, and Constantius (then based in Antioch) was the only one of his sons to travel to Constantinople for the funeral. Eusebius informs us that the dead emperor was laid in a golden coffin wrapped in imperial purple and lay in state in the palace surrounded by candles.¹²⁵ Then,

the second of his sons arrived at the city and brought his father's remains, himself leading the cortege. The military officers went in front in close order, and a throng of many thousands followed, and lancers and infantry escorted the Emperor's body. When they reached the shrine of the Saviour's Apostles they laid the coffin to rest there. The new Emperor Constantius, honouring his father in this way, by his presence and by the respects paid to him fulfilled the things which the obsequies required.¹²⁶

¹²² *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 360, trans. Whitby and Whitby 1989: 35. See also Barnes 1993: 214; McLynn 2006: 248–250.

¹²³ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16; see further Henck 2001: 292.

¹²⁴ Mango 1990: 59; Henck 2001: 293. Scholars have also seen Constantius' hand in the embellishment of Christian constructions begun by Constantine I at Jerusalem: see Kleinbauer 2006: 128–139; Henck 2001: 302.

¹²⁵ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.66.1–2.

¹²⁶ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.70.1–2, trans. Cameron and Hall 1999: 181. Although Julian in fact suggests Constantius reached his father while the latter was still alive: Julian., *Or.* 1.16c–d.

Sozomen informs us that after Constantine had been interred in the tomb he had constructed for himself at the Church of the Holy Apostles, “from this period it became the custom to deposit the remains of subsequent Christian emperors in the same place of interment”.¹²⁷ In turn, when Constantius died at Murocincta on the march against the rebellious Julian, Ammianus informs us his body was escorted “with regal pomp to Constantinople, to be interred beside his kinsfolk”.¹²⁸

As Kelly has observed, decisions surrounding the burial place of an emperor in the fourth century remained matters of tension.¹²⁹ Indeed, according to Eusebius, when news of Constantine I’s death reached Rome,

The inhabitants of the imperial city and the Senate and People of Rome, when they learnt of the Emperor’s decease, regarding the news as dreadful and the greatest possible disaster, fell into unrestrained grief ... and with suppliant cries begged that the remains of their own Emperor should be kept by them and laid in the imperial City.¹³⁰

Yet as Eusebius also informs us, Constantine had long been making plans for his burial in Constantinople.¹³¹ Though the phases of construction of Constantine’s mausoleum and the adjoining cruciform church remain debated, the most convincing explanation is that of Mango, with Constantine responsible for building the round mausoleum in which he was actually laid to rest, and Constantius II constructing the adjoining church, which Mango suggests had commenced by 356.¹³²

According to Julian, Constantius lavished splendid decorations on his father’s tomb¹³³; but by far the emperor’s most famous involvement in the Apostoleion complex was the translation of apostolic relics which took place in the late 350s.¹³⁴ According to Eusebius Constantine had always

¹²⁷ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.34. Similarly Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.40.

¹²⁸ Amm. Marc. 21.16.20. Jovian (the later emperor) was the officer accompanying Constantius’ body to Constantinople. The journey of the late emperor to his burial place is also described in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 5.

¹²⁹ Kelly 2003: 590. Similarly Brown 1999: 212–213; Hunt 2003: 109.

¹³⁰ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.69.1–2, trans. Cameron and Hall 1999: 180–181.

¹³¹ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.58–60.

¹³² Mango 1990: 57–59. Also Dagron 1974: 405–408; followed by Johnson 2009: 119ff.; 2006: 294–295; Kleinbauer 2006: 125.

¹³³ Julian., *Or.* 1.16c–d.

¹³⁴ Although Burgess argues for two translations: one in 336 of Andrew and Luke in the mausoleum, and then in 357 a re-translation, with the additional relics of St Timothy, into the new church: see generally Burgess 2003.

planned the association of his burial place with apostolic memorials,¹³⁵ and in 356 relics of St Timothy and the following year of St Andrew and St Luke were brought to Constantinople and deposited with great ceremony in the Church of the Holy Apostles.¹³⁶ Such a spectacular means of adorning the tomb of Constantine I—and his own future burial site—constituted an important long-term commitment by Constantius to the city of Constantinople.

That public emotions could run high over the treatment of the Constantinian burial site at Constantinople is clear from the bloodshed that ensued when the bishop Macedonius took it upon himself to move the tomb of Constantine in 359. According to Socrates, in 358 a major earthquake had struck and caused major damage in nearby Nicomedia,¹³⁷ and the bishop became concerned that,

the church where the coffin lay that contained the relics of the emperor Constantine threatened to fall ... Macedonius, therefore, wished to remove the emperor's remains, lest the coffin should be injured by the ruins ... and therefore moved the emperor's remains to the nearby church of St Acacius.¹³⁸

Though Macedonius' concerns may have been justified, he had undertaken to move the remains without imperial permission, and a riot resulted, while Constantius himself was apparently "highly incensed" with Macedonius both on account of the deaths in the riot and his acting without imperial consultation.¹³⁹ Macedonius was soon deposed and Constantine's remains must have been quickly returned; but the incident is a reminder of public attachment to imperial burial sites as well as official sensitivities surrounding them.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.60.3.

¹³⁶ Mango 1990: 52–53. See further for the discussion of the dating of the arrival of the relics: Woods 1991; Burgess 2003, esp. 28–30; McLynn 2006: 248 n. 45. On the history of relic translation in this period generally, see Mango 1990.

¹³⁷ Since we know that some of the Constantinian buildings of Constantinople were hastily constructed, Macedonius' concerns were probably quite reasonable—see e.g. comments at Julian., *Or.* 1.33; Zos. 2.32. Also Mango 1990: 60; Johnson 2009: 126.

¹³⁸ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.38.35–43. See further Dagron 1974: 404–405.

¹³⁹ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.38.35–43. See discussion at McLynn 1992: 27; Henck 2007: 155–156.

¹⁴⁰ And also, as McLynn observes, the issue of whether the church and mausoleum were controlled by the bishop or the emperor: McLynn 2006: 247–248; also Johnson 2009: 121.

If Constantius II's efforts to expand and embellish his father's tomb at Constantinople reflected both filial piety and the desire to encourage dynastic loyalty among the populace of the city founded by his father, a similar motivation may be found in his potential involvement in the building of a mausoleum for his sister Constantina at Rome. As Harries has recently emphasised, the residency of imperial women such as Constantina acted as "extensions of the imperial presence at Rome",¹⁴¹ and should also be taken into our account in assessing relationships between Constantine's sons and the imperial cities over which they reigned.¹⁴² Constantina appears to have taken up residence in Rome between 337 (when her first husband Hannibalianus was killed) and her second marriage to the Caesar Gallus in 351.¹⁴³ Upon this second marriage Constantina had travelled to Antioch with her husband, but when she died in Bithynia in 354¹⁴⁴ her body was transported to Rome for burial. Ammianus informs us that her young sister Helena, the wife of Julian, was also buried at Rome in 360: "he had sent to Rome the remains of his deceased wife Helena, to be laid to rest in his villa near the city on the Via Nomentana, where also her sister Constantina, formerly the wife of Gallus, was buried"¹⁴⁵

During her time in Rome Constantina had apparently lived in the imperial villa on the Via Nomentana and erected a basilica in honour of St Agnes, whose tomb was located in the catacombs at this site.¹⁴⁶ Although

¹⁴¹ Harries 2014: 16. As Harries points out, Constantina's marriage to Gallus would also connect her to two prominent Roman senators of the period, Vulcacius Rufinus and Neratius Cerealis: Harries 2014: 17. For a recent analysis of the activities of Constantina, see Dirschlmaier 2015.

¹⁴² The half-sister of Constantine I, Eutropia, was also a long-term resident in Rome: during the reign of Constantine I she had married the illustrious senator Virius Nepotianus, while her son Nepotianus would in 350 launch an ill-fated bid for the throne following the death of Constans: see *PLRE* 1: 316 on Eutropia, and *PLRE* 1: 624 for her son Nepotianus, and for the sequence of events see Barnes 1993: 101. Nepotianus' usurpation was swiftly and brutally put down by Magnentius. That Eutropia acted in some sense as a representative of the imperial family in Rome is suggested by the account of Athanasius, who was received by her at Rome in the early 340s: see Athanasius, *Apol. ad Const.* 6; Zos. 2.43.2; and Barnes 1993: 42–43, 50–62, 67, 85–86. See now also Hillner 2017, and the chapters by John Vanderspoeel and Shaun Tougher in this volume.

¹⁴³ Although her alleged involvement in the usurpation of Vetranio in Illyricum in 350 (see Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.22) suggests she did not spend the whole of her time in Rome at this point. See also Johnson 2009: 140.

¹⁴⁴ Amm. Marc. 14. 11.6–7.

¹⁴⁵ Amm. Marc. 21.1.3–5, trans. Rolfe.

¹⁴⁶ Johnson 2009: 140; 2006: 290; Curran 2000: 128.

it has been argued that Constantina built her mausoleum at the same time as the basilica to St Agnes,¹⁴⁷ it is possible that the construction was actually completed by her brother Constantius II, who in 354 when his sister died was based at Milan. In the wake of a major usurpation against the Constantinian house, Constantius may have been keen to emphasise another dynastic focal point of the urban fabric of Rome.¹⁴⁸

Regarding the chapel of Sant'Aquilino at Milan (mentioned above), among the many potential imperial personages suggested as intended for burial here is the emperor Constans.¹⁴⁹ The presence of Constantius II in Milan for several years during the 350s, along with Athanasius' assertion that Constantius was building a mausoleum for Constans (or "pretending to" as Athanasius writes,¹⁵⁰ tantalisingly leaving the location unspecified) offers this plausible possibility. As suggested by other scholars, it may well be that Constans had begun the building of Sant'Aquilino as a mausoleum for himself in the 340s, and it was later completed by Constantius II for his brother in the 350s.¹⁵¹ Moreover, as we have already seen, imperial mausoleum-building was an activity pursued by Constantius in other contexts in the 350s.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ For discussion see Kleinbauer 2006: 132.

¹⁴⁸ Johnson 2009: 142–143. Also Kleinbauer 2004: 68–69; 2006: 133–137. Kleinbauer 2006: 137 even suggests Constantius may have visited the site during his time in Rome in 357, and also that Constans could have been interred at Santa Costanza too. Mackie alternatively proposes Julian as the builder of Santa Costanza but admits the case is speculative (1997: 397–406). See now on Constantina's activities in Rome, Hillner 2017: 86–87.

¹⁴⁹ McLynn 1994: 178. Other suggested individuals have been Valentinian I (Kinney 1970–1971: 34–35), who was buried in Constantinople; Justina, his second wife (Krautheimer 1983: 91; also Kinney 1970–1971: 31), as well as the emperor Gratian (Krautheimer 1983: 90–91 suggests Gratian may have built the mausoleum but not been buried there; see also Johnson 2009: 167) whose burial place is unknown. The burial of Constans in Sant'Aquilino need not have precluded later burials of Gratian, Valentinian II or Justina in the same location. For a later dating of Sant'Aquilino however, see Löx 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* 69.

¹⁵¹ McLynn 1994: 178; Brown 1999: 178. I consider this a more likely scenario than the burial of Constans at Centcelles, contra Johnson 2009: 138–139. Much depends however on the timing of the deconstruction of the amphitheatre at Milan, from which spolia was used in the foundations of Sant'Aquilino—see Johnson 2009: 165.

¹⁵² Certainly in Constantinople, and possibly also at Rome; see further Johnson 2009: 139.

AN INCREASED FOCUS ON ROME AND CONSTANTINOPLE THROUGH THE 350s?

In the 350s, with Constantius II the sole surviving son of Constantine the Great, the imperial relationship with the old capitals of Rome and Constantinople was flourishing. In his visits to both cities, and in the resources dedicated to building (especially ecclesiastical building), and the creation or enhancement of multiple Constantinian dynastic mausolea, Constantius set his mark on the two cities, far more than either of his brothers ever had. Constantine II's reign was too short for us to know how his relationship with the imperial cities might have developed, and Constans seems to have been largely uninterested even in visiting Rome (although he remained in frequent contact with the senators and officers of the city). Constantius alone, whatever the gaps in our knowledge, we can certainly say, invested heavily in Rome and Constantinople during the last decade of his reign.

This may help to explain two further moments of imperial interaction with these two cities during the 350s and early 360s, both described by Ammianus, which angered in one case the emperor, and in the other the Senate of Rome. Following his bad behaviour at Antioch, in 354 the Caesar Gallus was summoned by Constantius to journey westwards to his court—and ultimately, as we know, to his death. Gallus chose to stop at Constantinople en route, and as Ammianus informs us: “entering Constantinople as if in the height of prosperity and security, he exhibited horse-races and crowned Thorax the charioteer as victor”.¹⁵³ Apparently upon hearing of Gallus' activities at Constantinople, “Constantius was enraged beyond all human bounds”.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, it was rumoured that Julian too had travelled to Constantinople and met his brother Gallus there, a charge which he needed the assistance of Constantius' wife Eusebia in having dismissed.¹⁵⁵ Constantius may have been angry that Gallus had overstepped the privileges of his position as Caesar in holding races, or that he had delayed on his journey to Constantius' court.¹⁵⁶ But perhaps it mattered most of all that Gallus had indulged in these activities—and in the adulation of the crowds—in the imperial city of Constantinople.

¹⁵³ Amm. Marc. 14.11.12, trans. Rolfe.

¹⁵⁴ Amm. Marc. 14.11.13.

¹⁵⁵ Amm. Marc. 15.2.7–8.

¹⁵⁶ Brown 1999: 202–203.

Less than a decade later, Julian, following his acclamation as Augustus by the army, had written to the Senate of Rome (among others),¹⁵⁷ attempting to explain his actions as he began his march against Constantius. According to Ammianus:

he wrote to the senate a sharp oration full of invective, in which he specifically charged Constantius with disgraceful acts and faults. When these were read in the House, while Tertullus was still acting as prefect, the striking independence of the nobles was manifest as well as their grateful affection; for with complete agreement they one and all shouted: “We demand reverence for your own creator.”¹⁵⁸

The Senate and city of Rome, it seems, had not forgotten Constantius and his marked attentions to them through the course of the 350s.¹⁵⁹ Through the attention they had received, both Rome and Constantinople were cities where pro-active efforts had been made by Constantius to attract and perpetuate dynastic memory relating to himself and to the Constantinian house, and Constantius seems to have been peculiarly sensitive to their use.¹⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

According to the ecclesiastical historians, on his deathbed Constantine I had “granted many privileges to the cities of Rome and Constantinople”.¹⁶¹ These two cities were singled out by Constantine,¹⁶² and so they would continue to be by the longest-reigning of his sons, Constantius II. Of

¹⁵⁷ His *Letter to the Athenians* on the same topic survives.

¹⁵⁸ Amm. Marc. 21.10.7, trans. Rolfe. See Matthews 1989: 235.

¹⁵⁹ Rome’s acquiescence in the usurpation of Magnentius in the early 350s may also have been a memory the city sought to blot out by refusing to endorse Julian’s claims; see Kelly 2003: 602. The rash of statues erected to Constantius at Rome by Urban Prefects in the 350s (e.g. *LSA* 838, 1097, 1278, 1279, 1360, 1361, all ed. Machado) also attests to senatorial eagerness to demonstrate their loyalty to him.

¹⁶⁰ For discussion see Brown 1999: 186–187. The tradition of Constantinople’s loyalty to the house of Constantine was also invoked during the rebellion of Procopius in the 360s: for details see Lenski 2002: 68–115.

¹⁶¹ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.39; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.34. The privileges are not specified, however.

¹⁶² Even if his relations with the populace of Rome were not always smooth, as Zosimus suggests over Constantine’s apparent refusal to offer sacrifice on the Capitol in 326: *Zos.* 2.29.5.

Constantine II and Constans we can say little of their relationships with the imperial cities under their control, other than highlighting those in which their courts were based, both as Caesars under their father's rule, and as Augusti in their own right. For the first thirteen years after 337, the cities of Trier, Arles, Milan, Naissus and Sirmium were favoured by the young emperors of the West, while Antioch was privileged with the near-constant presence of Constantius II through the winter months of each year. In 350 however, with the death of Constans, a shift in policy was required of Constantius II, which saw the cities of Rome, and perhaps most of all, Constantinople, come increasingly to the forefront of imperial concern.

Constantius' interaction with the populace of Rome, as portrayed by Ammianus, demonstrated his considerable ability both to awe a crowd with his majesty and to respond appropriately to their expectations,¹⁶³ in ways which we hear of few of his successors before Theodosius I (379–395) managing to do. Constantius' building projects too were calculated both to benefit his favoured seat of Antioch—such as through improving harbour facilities and thus aiding his military preparations as well as trade opportunities—and to provide a focal point for dynastic loyalty, such as through his expansion of his father's mausoleum complex at Constantinople. As the number of Constantinian emperors dwindled, the desire of the remaining emperor Constantius II to stamp his authority (and that of his family) on what were still the dominant imperial cities—Rome and Constantinople—grew.

Although the military demands of his office meant that Constantius generally continued to use other cities to house his court, it was under his rule, and particularly after the 350s,¹⁶⁴ that Constantinople began to come into its own as one of the foremost imperial cities of the Roman empire, laying the foundations for the longer-term imperial residencies that would begin under the Theodosian dynasty.¹⁶⁵ Themistius in his third oration declared to Constantius that:

Your city differs from your father's in more respects than his did from its predecessor and has progressed to a true and permanent beauty from an artificial and ephemeral one ... For when, emerging from the womb into the

¹⁶³ Henck 2007: 148, 149–150.

¹⁶⁴ Brown 1999: 210.

¹⁶⁵ For Theodosian residency in Constantinople, see Croke 2010. On Constantius' efforts laying the groundwork for the Theodosians in Constantinople, see Brown 1999: 210–211.

light of day, she was left bereft of her father and in need of infant clothes, you as a good elder brother took her up like a delicate little sister, and immediately considering her worthy of proper upbringing, immediately thought about milk and nourishment, and you showed her off to be quite beautiful and great, such as a god or king might desire.¹⁶⁶

As the recent creation of Constantine I, Constantinople was highly dependent on imperial patronage for its status,¹⁶⁷ and in Constantius, it seems, it found its new patron.

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¹⁶⁶Them., *Or.* 3.47c–d, trans. Heather and Moncur 2001: 134. See further Vanderspoel 1995: 103.

¹⁶⁷McLynn 1992: 22.

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A Father's Legacy: Foreign Affairs Under the Sons of Constantine

Michael Kulikowski

Constantine bequeathed his successors a consolidated empire, though one that faced problems on every frontier. Most of these were the product of Constantine's own expansive project of world conquest, and of proselytism beyond the imperial *limes*. The lasting antagonism among his sons, even after they had seen off the potential threat of their collateral relations, meant that their interest in making one another's lives difficult usually trumped paying attention to events in neighbouring polities. Likewise, Constantius' monomaniacal obsession with religious conformity occupied as much or more of his attention than did his civil conflict with Constans or the threat from Persia (for all that Ammianus is a hostile and hyperbolic witness, he is not wrong in his diagnosis of Constantius' priorities).¹ In short, the structural realities of the post-Constantinian period meant that there was nothing like an imperial foreign policy; at best there were

¹ Amm. Marc. 21.16.17, on the hamstringing of the *cursus publicus* by the hordes of bishops using it to attend councils. In defence of Constantius, see now Diefenbach 2012, 2015.

M. Kulikowski (✉)
Department of History, Penn State, University Park, PA, USA
e-mail: mek31@psu.edu

policies, in the plural, but more often *ad hoc* lurching from crisis to crisis as other circumstances permitted. Yet some of the frontier problems the sons of Constantine faced were a direct consequence of the old emperor's unexpected death and the failure of his succession plan to outlive him; others were the consequence of structural elements that did survive him, for instance, the dispersal of regional power among his putative heirs and the rise of powerful military establishments at Trier, Antioch and Sirmium, with increasingly regional loyalties and interests. This mattered quite a lot in balancing attentions between Rhine and Danube frontiers. Meanwhile, at Antioch, administrative and military commands were unusually concentrated, because Persia continued, as it long had been, to be the primary enemy in the imperial imagination. The Persian empire, ruled throughout our period by Shapur II, was indisputably the most sophisticated of Rome's neighbours, but one that faced dangers on its own frontiers.² Disruption in the Central Asian steppe and the Hindu Kush constantly tempered the shahanshah's capacity to deal with Rome, even though Constantine's intemperate religious meddling in kingdoms that had been traditional Persian clients had set up a new front for confrontation between the two empires. The frontiers of North Africa and northern Britain were for structural reasons constant sources of modest but manageable disturbance. In both regions, the land beyond the *limes* was simply too resource-poor to allow for the growth of politically complex enemies capable of doing real damage. Tribal raiding, whether Moorish or Pictish, was destructive but not structurally threatening.

All of these political realities were recognized in the succession plans Constantine had announced at his tricennalia of 335. There would be five heirs to his empire; Constantine II in Trier, whence Alamanni and Franci could be managed with the occasional punitive *razzia*; Dalmatius in Sirmium, where Constantine's massive Gothic victory of 332 imposed decades of peace; Constans in Italy, looking after the African nerve centre of the *annonae*; Constantius in Antioch, facing east and preparing for the next war; and finally Hannibalianus, the proximate cause of that next war, since by declaring him king of Armenia and *rex regum* (calqued from "shahanshah" with all the menace that implied), Constantine telegraphed his

²Christensen 1944 remains seminal, though now very dated. Standard account, also in need of updating, in Frye 1984: 271–357. Very useful essays in Potts 2013, but with no comprehensive narrative.

intention of conquering Persia and adding it to his own domain.³ There were other provocations of Persia too, and none of them disappeared simply because Constantine's succession plans went awry. For though Constantine spent the last two years of his reign preparing for a Persian war, he never launched it. Setting out for Syria in Spring 337, he fell ill not far beyond Nicomedia, accepted baptism from that city's bishop Eusebius and died on 22 May, bequeathing his heirs an inevitable war. These were not the heirs the dead emperor had envisaged at the time of his tricennalia: Constantius, who had been at Antioch when news of his father's sickness reached him, accompanied his body back to Constantinople for burial in the church of the Twelve Apostles. He then organized the massacre of his collateral relatives, Constantine's half-brothers and their offspring, among them Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, Caesar and *rex regum*, respectively. Only Constantine's three sons by Fausta—Constantine II, Constantius himself and Constans—would be allowed to succeed, the three of them becoming Augusti on 9 September, and contemporary propaganda writing Constantine's original plans completely out of history.⁴ This summer of blood upset the balance of power that Constantine had hoped to implement. On the other hand, it left the dynamics of the frontiers largely unchanged. What *had* changed was the mere possibility of acting in a concerted or unified manner to deal with the frontiers. Moreover, the struggles among the surviving sons—first the death of Constantine II in battle against Constans in 340, then the periods of cold war between Constans and Constantius—had a lasting and deleterious impact on the western provinces that was deeply exacerbated by the revolt of Magnentius.⁵

PERSIA

At the celebration of Constantine's tricennalia, for which Eusebius of Caesarea gives us an eyewitness account, there appear embassies not just from the usual Roman neighbours, but Ethiopians and Indians as well.⁶ Much as we might, we should not doubt that testimony. The Christian

³ Burgess 2008 for a full account.

⁴ This is visible in Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.7, 4.51.

⁵ See the chapter by Lewis in this volume reappraising the conflict between Constantine II and Constans. On the revolt of Magnentius see the chapter by Humphries in this volume.

⁶ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.50.

evangelization of Axum had taken place towards the end of Constantine's reign, and relations with India were part of the *casus belli* for the war with Persia that Constantine began to prepare in the year of the tricennalia, with the naming of Hannibalianus as King of Armenia and *rex regum* a major trailer—rather than pick sides in the ongoing Armenian succession crisis, and even though he gave shelter to one of the rival heirs to the late king Tiridates II, Constantine intended to impose a member of his own family on the Armenian throne.⁷ That would almost certainly have been provocation enough for military confrontation, but there were many others, and the hostility had been mounting for years, indeed had been on the cards since 324, when Constantine defeated Licinius. Shapur, who had come to his throne in 309 as a very young child, had reached his majority in the 320s and was beginning to assert himself against his sibling competitors. In 324, when Constantine succeeded Licinius as eastern Augustus, Shapur had written to him, congratulating him on his accession and welcoming him to the family of kings. Constantine, with the arrogant lack of gratitude for which he was well-known, had instead hectored the shahanshah on the need to treat Christians in his realm with due respect. He also denounced the Mazdaism of the Persian court as false religion.⁸ There was more. Back in the 310s, the Armenian king Tiridates II had converted to Christianity inspired by the Roman bishop of Cappadocia (now known as Saint Gregory the Illuminator).⁹ Irritating as that may have been to Persia, Armenia was a long-standing bone of contention between the empires and one more problem was perhaps neither here nor there. But when the king of Caucasian Iberia converted, that was a different matter. Iberia had always been part of the Persian orbit, a Sasanian client as Lazica was a Roman one, and its rulers had shared the Zoroastrianism of their royal neighbours.¹⁰ In the 320s, the Iberian king Meribanes III not only concluded an alliance with Rome, but he himself became a Christian and determined to evangelize his kingdom. Constantine welcomed an embassy and began to supply Meribanes with priests and money to build churches. That was a damaging interference in Persia's traditional sphere.

⁷Axum: Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.9–10; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.19; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.24. For Hannibalianus see above.

⁸Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 1.24; Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.8–13; Amm. Marc. 25.4.23; Cedrenus 1: 516–517 (Bonn).

⁹Chronology is fraught: see Barnes 1981: 258; Lightfoot 2005: 487.

¹⁰For Iberia, see Braund 1994: 238–260. Conversion: Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.11; Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 1.23.

Much the most infuriating of Constantine's actions, however, was the harbouring of a royal challenger to Shapur's rule: his brother Ohrmazd, or Hormisdas as he is known in Latin.¹¹ Hormisdas would go on to become an important adviser to Constantius II, and he remained a major figure in imperial politics until his death. The combination of insult, interference in the Persian sphere of activity and the harbouring of a royal rival were all meant to cause as much offence as they did in fact do, but it was succession crisis in Armenia that (as so often in Roman history before and after) guaranteed a major Romano-Persian war, the first since Galerius' stunning victory over Narses in 298 and the subsequent lasting peace.¹²

In the wake of the tricennalia with its theatrics of world dominance, Constantinian propaganda began to put about the rumour that Shapur had stolen the gifts which the ambassadors of India were bringing to Constantine's anniversary celebrations.¹³ It was meant to justify a war that he wanted avidly to pursue. Constantius II had pulled together the field army for the invasion when his father died and was left to deal with the fallout. Shapur had understood the scale of Constantine's bellicose intentions and prepared his own army to meet any Roman invasion. When the emperor's death forestalled one, at least for a time, Shapur decided to go on the offensive himself. He struck pre-emptively against Nisibis, a fortified citadel in Mesopotamia that had long been one of the key defensive points of the imperial frontier garrisons. In 337, as would happen many times throughout the century, Shapur's army got bogged down in the siege, and that dynamic was in fact built into Roman imperial strategy. Because the Persian army was not organized in the same fashion as the professional Roman forces, but rather consisted of a hard core of the shah's own troops and followers, those of the great Persian and Parthian lords, as well as peasant levies and client auxiliaries from the steppe, it was as formidable as the Roman army but also more prone to breaking up under pressure of unforeseen circumstance.¹⁴ By forcing Persian armies to engage in siege warfare in Mesopotamia, the Romans could often prevent

¹¹Amm. Marc. 16.10.16; Zos. 2.27.1–4; John of Antioch, fr. 178 (Müller) = 266 (Roberto); Zonar. 13.5.25–33. Full references at *PLRE* 1: 443 (Hormisdas 2). For his influence with Constantius, Cameron 1989.

¹²Victory: see Eutr. 9.24–25; Oros. 7.25.9–11. For a relatively balanced account of Galerius, Leadbetter 2009.

¹³Cedrenus 1: 516–517; Amm. Marc. 25.4.23 is a back-reference to his treatment of the episode in a now-lost book.

¹⁴Howard-Johnston 2013.

them from penetrating the interior provinces and avoid the dangers of pitched battle with the only enemy really able to take on a Roman field army on more or less equal terms.

The strategy worked in 337: when Shapur failed to take Nisibis rapidly by storm, the siege dragged on too long to sustain and he was forced to withdraw back into Persian territory early in the year.¹⁵ Both sides then returned to the normal approach of proxy confrontation: Constantius sent an army into Armenia to install a sympathetic client on the throne, and Constantine's plan to actually hold Armenia as a Roman province under a member of the imperial family was now abandoned.¹⁶ Constantius also entered into an alliance with some of the Arab desert tribes between Roman and Persian territories. Increasingly, both sides would use the desert tribes, both sedentary and nomadic, to fight their proxy wars, a dynamic that would become increasingly significant as the centuries wore on.¹⁷ In the 340s, however, feints and border skirmishes were the order of the day. Our sources suggest that as many as nine separate battles were fought between the king and the emperor, and that the emperor commanded personally in at least two of them. Considerable ingenuity has been expended trying to make sense of the tangled and highly opaque evidence and tease out when and where each of these encounters took place, but tempting though it is to do so, certainty will always be elusive.¹⁸ The overall dynamic is clear, however, Constantius pushing as hard on the eastern front as his other commitments allowed (among them the efforts to impose a uniform creed on his bishops at a series of councils), and Shapur refusing to give up his claims on the Mesopotamian territory lost by Narses to Galerius half a century before.¹⁹ Annual warfare, on a larger or smaller scale, was the result. In 344, Roman forces were badly mauled in a battle at Singara/Eleia, another of the region's key fortress-centres.²⁰ But one of

¹⁵ Jer., *Chron.* s.a. 338; Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.23; *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 337 (Bonn); Theophanes, AM 5829. The date cannot be regarded as certain, Burgess 1999: 233–238, argues persuasively for 337.

¹⁶ Julian., *Or.* 1.20a–21a.

¹⁷ See now the important contributions in Fisher 2015, esp. 67–89, 214–275.

¹⁸ The evidence is well collected in Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 143–230, which is sensible in not pushing it too hard or far.

¹⁹ Compressed but accurate and comprehensively annotated overview of Persian-Roman relations from 299–364 in Lenski 2002: 154–165.

²⁰ Lib., *Or.* 59.99–120; Julian., *Or.* 1.22d–25b, accounts not consistent in details. See Burgess 1999: 270, for the date, which supports the arguments first made by Bury 1896.

Shapur's sons (also a Narses) was killed in this or a closely related battle, which, though deadly, does not seem to have been decisive.²¹ When precisely other battles at Singara, Eleia and elsewhere took place is unclear, and the three reported sieges of Nisibis cannot be dated precisely.²² Around 350, however, Shapur found himself so threatened on his eastern frontiers that he needed to patch up a truce and concentrate on dealing with his neighbours in the steppe.

The disturbances on the Central Asian edge of Shapur's empire were the result of huge changes to the dynamic of empire still further east, in the Hexi corridor of northwestern China. Broadly speaking, they represent far-ranging military action on the part of various steppe nomads all claiming descent from the Xiongnu (= Huns).²³ In the 350s, neither the Persians nor the Romans had any idea of what was going on in this larger sense, but Shapur was kept occupied on his eastern frontier for much of the 350s. The sources are opaque, but various Hunnic groups were successful in taking over parts of the Hindu Kush and the former Kushan domains in South Asia, and the numismatic evidence demonstrates the taking over the local monetary economy by these Huns.²⁴ Moreover, the concentration of Sasanian minting in the frontier zone in this period suggests that Shapur was campaigning there almost continuously for the better part of a decade.²⁵ By 358, however, the most immediate challenges had been suppressed, and at least one Hunnic clan had allied itself to Shapur as his client.²⁶ The shahanshah immediately began to muster a campaign army to make good on earlier plans to attack the Roman frontier and retake long-disputed territories. Negotiations occupied much of 359,

²¹ Festus, *Brev.* 27, at an otherwise unknown location called Narasara; Theophanes AM 5815. The date is in fact quite speculative, and Burgess 1999: 243 argues for dating it to 343.

²² Eutrop. 10.10.1; Jer., *Chron.* s.a. 348; *Descriptio consulum* s.a. 348; Amm. Marc 18.5.7, all on a night-time battle at Singara. Nisibis: Jer., *Chron.* s.a. 346; Theophanes AM 5837; Julian., *Or.* 1.27a–29d, 262b–267a; Theophanes AM 5843; Zonar. 13.7.1–15.

²³ See the essays in Bemann and Schmauder 2015. That the same indigenous ethnonym lies behind Chinese, Sogdian, Persian, Greek, Roman and Sanskrit for these people claiming “Hunnic” descent is proved by De La Vaissière 2005, but the consequences he draws for actual ethnic continuity need not be accepted.

²⁴ The classic study remains Göbl 1967, but see the new discoveries published in Pfisterer 2012; Vondrovec 2014; Jongeward and Cribb 2015.

²⁵ The six volumes of the ongoing *Sylloge Nummarum Sasanidarum* published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences are essential here.

²⁶ This was Grumbates: Amm. Marc. 18.6.22.

but Shapur refused to give up his demand that Constantius surrender the eastern Roman provinces to him.

Constantius reappointed one of his generals, Ursicinus, to high command as *magister peditum*, placing him in charge of the preparations to meet Shapur's invasion.²⁷ We know a great deal about this campaign because the historian Ammianus Marcellinus took part in it and expounds in detail the hardships faced in the Persian siege of Amida.²⁸ It is clear that the Roman field army had not been properly deployed when the invasion began, because Ursicinus himself was almost taken in an ambush by the Persian cavalry while inspecting some frontier defences. As so often, however, the great cities of Mesopotamia proved capable of stopping a Persian army in its tracks, when the garrison at Amida killed the son of Shapur's royal client Grumbates—a king of the "Chionitae" according to Ammianus, though we cannot be sure which Hunnic clan he commanded.²⁹ To satisfy Grumbates, Shapur consented to a full-scale siege of the city, in the winter of 359/360, and the ability of the Amidan garrison to hold off the besiegers for a couple of months forced Shapur to withdraw and prepare another attack for the following year.³⁰

The proclamation of Julian as Augustus in response to Constantius' demand for a levy of western troops to fight in Persia placed Constantius in a bad position. The levy he had requested was quite substantial, 4 entire infantry units and 300 men from every other unit in the Gallic army, but it was reasonable given the scale of the threat on the eastern frontier and the relative stability that Julian had by then imposed on the West.³¹ Deprived of western levies, and with his Caesar in open revolt, Constantius could not launch a counteroffensive against Shapur, whose armies took Singara and Bezabde on the extreme edge of Roman territory in summer 360 and razed the former city.³² In the winter of 360/361, Roman armies tried to retake Bezabde, but there was no avoiding a full-scale war with the

²⁷ Ursicinus is Ammianus' hero (Thompson 1947: 42–55, remains standard), and known only from his pages.

²⁸ Amm. Marc. 18.18–19.8.

²⁹ Amm. Marc. 18.6.22, 19.1.

³⁰ Paschoud 1989 doubts Ammianus' account of Shapur's motive for the siege and instead suggests that, on learning that the route over the Euphrates into Syria was blocked at both Capersana and Zeugma, he contented himself with the more immediate target of Amida on the Tigris.

³¹ Amm. Marc. 20.4.3.

³² Amm. Marc. 19.2.8, 20.6.5, 20.7. Dates are as always imprecise.

shahanshah.³³ The only question was when it would come, given that civil war was now looming as well. Constantius' deathbed act of statesmanship secured the succession for Julian, whose monumental folly ended in the catastrophic invasion of Persia and the eventual loss of the Mesopotamian provinces that had been in Roman hands for more than half a century.³⁴

THE BALKANS

The Balkans, in our period, are an afterthought, a relatively insignificant part of the imperial calculus, because of the completeness of the Constantinian victories there in the 330s. Gothic power had been expanding in the region ever since Aurelian (270–275) had effectively abandoned the Trajanic provinces of Dacia in the 270s.³⁵ The mixed agricultural population of the region between the western Carpathians and the Donets River was gradually subjected to groups of Gothic ruling elites, with several different subgroups among them. Older ruling populations—Carpi and Sarmatians—were severely challenged even during the Tetrarchic period, while Gothic power was clearly boosted by the competition of Licinius and Constantine for their services.³⁶ That said, the massive punitive campaigns launched by Constantine and Constantine II in 332 led to a treaty that had two major effects. First, it opened up trade along the whole lower Danube frontier, effectively integrating Gothia into the provincial economy. Second, it turned the emerging clans of Gothic kings (or perhaps better “judges”) into reliable clients, suppliers of manpower for units of the field army and a source for stable governance beyond the *limes*; the fact that this also allowed these rulers the capacity to grow stronger and gain a tighter and more structured hold on their followers, and along with it the rudiments of a governing apparatus, would have few

³³ Amm. Marc. 20.11.

³⁴ Death of Constantius: Amm. Marc. 21.15.3 (with erroneous date); *Descriptio consulum* s.a. 361; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.47.4, 3.1.1. Julian's campaign is fully treated in Matthews 1989: 130–179.

³⁵ In general for what follows see Kulikowski 2007: 71–112. For an alternative account, see Wolfram 2009: 67–124, which fruitfully revises earlier editions (including the second, which is the basis of the English translation) and corrects many of the excesses which I and others have criticized. The English translation, Wolfram 1988, ought no longer to be used in place of this most recent fifth German edition.

³⁶ The Sarmatians are insufficiently studied, but see Lebedynsky 2002 for a richly illustrated if theoretically archaic introduction; and Dittrich 1984 on their interactions with Rome. For the Carpi, Bichir 1976 remains standard.

negative consequences for the Romans during the reign of Constantine's sons. It was their Valentinianic and Theodosian successors who would feel the full impact of emergent Gothic strength.³⁷

One disturbing factor in the post-Constantinian Balkans was the disappearance of the Sarmatians as a real source of power on the frontiers. Sandwiched between Carpathians and the Danube bend, these long-time imperial neighbours were one of the most manageable sets of clients the high empire had known. But just as the Carpi had disappeared in the Tetrarchic period under the expanding pressure of the Goths (presumably absorbed into them), so now the Sarmatians disappeared. These Sarmatians had invited Constantine to help them against the Goths in 332, and it had been that request that served as the immediate *casus belli*. Then, in 334, the servile agricultural population over whom the Sarmatian elites ruled rebelled against them, their effectiveness probably enhanced by the warrior classes' prior weakening at Gothic hands.³⁸ Thirty thousand Sarmatians, we are told, fled into Roman service (the number is not implausible), and were distributed widely through Italy and the Balkans, ongoing evidence of the effectiveness of Roman client management and resettlement in the late imperial period.

Dalmatius had been slated to take control of these newly docile Balkans in the arrangements outlined by Constantine at the tricennalia, but in the event it was to Constans that his share fell, excepting only Thrace (and with it the new city of Constantinople), which went to Constantius. Constans' civil war with Constantine II in 340 bequeathed the youngest son the vast western dioceses of Gaul and Spain on top of the Balkans, and meant that Constans had to spend several years in Trier and the Rhineland, making himself visible to the troops and the high command.³⁹ But he spent more time in the Balkans, and seems to have preferred his residence at Sirmium, exacerbating rivalries between Gallic and Balkan establishments that would in time lead to the young emperor's downfall. During the periods of cold war between Constans and Constantius, the former generally resided in his Balkan territories, keeping an eye on his brother's progress on the Persian frontier but doing nothing to help him despite his commanding considerably larger forces than did Constantius. The imperial presence in Sirmium meant the Danube frontiers were quite stable

³⁷ Kulikowski 2007: 113–153.

³⁸ *Origo Constantini* 6.31; Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.6; Jer., *Chron.* s.a. 334.

³⁹ His movements are traced in Barnes 1993: 224–225.

throughout the 340s, and the loyalist coup of Vetranio in 350 prolonged that stability.⁴⁰ Constantius' war against Magnentius, however, offered opportunities for exploitation to the neighbours beyond the frontiers and in the later 350s, once Julian was notionally in charge in Gaul, Constantius found it necessary to campaign beyond the Danube. The enemies there were Quadi, Sarmatians and some of the latter's former subjects, known as the Limigantes.⁴¹ Ammianus preserves a lot of detail of the campaigns in 357 and 358, but few of these are structurally significant. What seems clear is that, with a large chunk of the Balkan field army away in Italy and then in Gaul fighting the usurper, the Quadi and Sarmatians, in the region of the Danube bend opposite Pannonia, had begun to raid Pannonia. Then, by the winter of 357/358, Constantius was in a position to do something about it, during a brief lull in Persian hostilities. Several months in the spring of 358 were enough to subdue multiple different groups of Quadi and Sarmatians, with the emperor personally leading the army through their territory. The rest of the campaigning season was devoted to the Limigantes, former subjects of the Sarmatians who had also begun to raid the provinces when imperial campaigns against the Quadi gave them the opportunity. Ammianus offers us a set piece encounter, in which the emperor summons the Limigantes to answer for their crimes and, when they become disorderly, unleashes the army on them, trapping them in an enclosed spot near where Tisza and Danube meet, and slaughtering them in great numbers—apparently half an hour was enough to break their resistance altogether. Their territory was then laid waste, with the mass enslavement of the non-combatant population, and neighbouring tribes were also attacked seemingly for no reason save to spread a deterrent fear. The winter of 358/359 saw either renewed raiding by the Limigantes or perhaps just unauthorized movements of those whose homes had been ruined in the previous year, so that Constantius again launched a campaign, this time before spring had even arrived. Ammianus describes a hair-raising episode in which the emperor was nearly killed when what had begun as a peaceful rally to seal a new treaty turned ugly; as soon as Constantius was safe, the Roman troops organized a massacre, and that was pretty much the normal way things went on the northern frontier.⁴² A

⁴⁰ Full references on this well-documented event at *PLRE* 1: 954 (Vetranio 1).

⁴¹ *Amm. Marc.* 17.12–13. In general for Ammianus' account of Sarmatian and Quadic affairs, see Dittrich 1984.

⁴² *Amm. Marc.* 19.11.

combination of bad luck and bad planning could endanger imperial forces, but as soon as the Romans got fully engaged, there was little chance of successful resistance.⁴³ In all of the Quadic and Sarmatian disturbances, the structural significance of the Goths is worth noticing. Despite the heavy campaigning between the Danube bend and Carpathians, Gothic leaders seem to have been entirely at peace, the terms of the 332 treaty holding throughout. Indeed, one Gothic group, the Taifali, was enlisted to attack the Sarmatians on the empire's behalf in the campaigning of 357.⁴⁴ In effect, the Balkans were the calm centre on whose quiescence all the sons of Constantine depended throughout our period.

GAUL AND THE WEST

The death of Constantine II in the civil war of 340 left his western regime intact so that Constans, who was completely unknown to the Gallic establishment, had little choice but to work with Constantine II's advisers and supporters there. He seems to have made every effort to do so, leaving Italy and the Balkans behind for the better part of three years, residing at Trier between 340 and 342, accompanying the army on at least two Frankish campaigns, and touring the British armies in 343.⁴⁵ He divided the next two years between Trier and the Balkans, and then settled down at Sirmium, a decision that exacerbated the existing rivalry between Gallic and Balkan high commands. That particular rivalry would repeatedly have fatal consequences during the fourth century, but in the short term, Constans had to be in the Balkans to manage a fraught relationship with the regime of his brother Constantius.⁴⁶ This frequent absence led directly to the coup that brought Constans down, because the Gallic military establishment was unwilling to have responsibility for the defence of the Rhine and upper Danube frontiers without the emperor being present to support them. The plot had been prepared well before Constans finally decided to visit his Gallic territory at the end of 349. The proclamation of Flavius Magnentius in January of 350, the flight and execution of Constans

⁴³ Elton 1996, summarized and updated in Elton 2007, remains the definitive account of warfare in this period, though see also Elton 2013 and the other essays in Sarantis and Christie 2013 for recent developments.

⁴⁴ Amm. Marc. 17.13.19–20.

⁴⁵ Barnes 1993: 224–225.

⁴⁶ Not just the rebellion against, and execution of Constans, but the later coup by the Balkan high command after the death of Valentinian I: Kelly 2013.

and the then inevitable civil war between the usurper and Constantius would have as dangerous consequences for Gaul as it had for the Persian frontier. Because Vetrano held the Balkans for Constantius and then bequeathed him the command of two field armies to Magnentius' one, and because by appointing Gallus as Caesar in Antioch, Constantius felt free to leave the Persian front, the legitimate emperor did seem assured of victory. The battle was much harder fought than expected, however. Mursa left half the eastern armies and two-thirds of the western one dead on the field, numbers which are not necessarily exaggerated simply because they seem so large.⁴⁷ We saw above what this meant for stability in the Balkans, but the situation was worse in Gaul. After the suicide of Magnentius and Decentius following the loss at Mons Seleucus, it seems that neither the Gallic field army nor the Rhine frontier was ever really the same again. This is something that has only been recognized relatively recently, but the evidence for imperial administration of the northern Gallic provinces gets abruptly worse after the 350s.⁴⁸ The field army of Gaul as disclosed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (whenever we date it) is not large, and the frontier infrastructure is much less elaborate than in Britain or the Balkans, or even Africa.⁴⁹ Though parts of this evidence clearly postdate the later civil war under Magnus Maximus and the stripping of some garrison forces by Stilicho, the overall picture of a relatively *ad hoc* treatment of the lower Rhine frontier, and to some extent even the middle Rhine as well, is quite evident.

More importantly, the alienation of the northern Gallic provinces from the central empire becomes a structural part of imperial history after 353, one which necessarily had an impact on foreign affairs. First, the *magister militum per Gallias* Silvanus, appointed in the aftermath of Magnentius' defeat, had almost no opportunity to restore the security of the frontier or reconstitute the Gallic field army before being falsely accused of usurpation and murdered.⁵⁰ Then, the campaigns of Julian did very little to permanently secure the provincial interior. Elevated to the rank of Caesar at Milan on 6 November 355, Julian was sent off to Gaul a month later with a copy of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and instructions from Constantius to take

⁴⁷Zonar. 13.8.17.

⁴⁸Halsall 2007: 131–162.

⁴⁹*Not. Dign.*, [occ.] 7.63–117, 37–39, 41. Kulikowski 2000, but taking into account Zuckermann 1998.

⁵⁰Amm. Marc. 15.5. There are no coins, so there was no usurpation: Drinkwater 1994.

no initiatives and let the proper generals do the fighting.⁵¹ Julian tried very hard to ignore this advice, although in summer 356 he did permit himself to be led by Constantius' generals Marcellus and Ursicinus in an invasion of Alamannia. The victorious army's choice of winter headquarters is particularly revealing of the decline of the northern frontier zone: dispersed throughout northern Gaul, which suggests that ravages of the civil war had not been repaired enough for a campaign army to be supplied in a single location. Why Julian chose to winter at Senonia with only his guard units and none of the field army is unclear, but it meant he was forced to hold out for months against a Frankish siege.⁵² Even if Ammianus is exaggerating to magnify the heroism of his protagonist, the mere fact of Franks getting so far into, and operating effectively within, the Gallic interior is remarkable. Raiding parties are one thing, but keeping an emperor pinned down for several months is a normal feature of the Persian frontier, not the Gallic.

Equally interesting was the response: rather than campaign in Francia on the lower Rhine, Constantius insisted that the 357 campaign season be directed against Alamannia.⁵³ The new *magister militum* Severus, with Julian in tow, was meant to rendezvous in Alamannic territory with Constantius' senior *magister peditum* Barbatio, who would cross the upper Danube in Raetia Secunda. The plan failed because Julian insisted on fighting minor engagements en route rather than following the original plan. Since the pincer movement failed, and Barbatio had no intention of being caught with his supply lines cut in Alamannic territory, the Alamannic leaders who had been preparing to meet the invasion instead decided to launch one of their own: again, we are seeing a surprising escalation on the Gallic frontiers, especially by contrast to the relatively well controlled situation in the Balkans. Julian found himself badly outnumbered at Strasbourg in 357 (the figures of 13,000 to 35,000, given by Ammianus, seem inflated on the Alamannic side at least), and pressed very hard by a much more aggressive Alamannic army than had previously been fielded. Yet Julian disposed his men on a narrow front, harassed the Alamannic infantry with his cavalry and then launched an infantry assault that broke the Alamannic line and led to their total rout.⁵⁴ This victory

⁵¹ Amm. Marc. 15.8.

⁵² Amm. Marc. 16.4.

⁵³ For these campaigns, Drinkwater 2007: 217–265.

⁵⁴ Amm. Marc. 16.12.

shows, as Constantius was simultaneously showing in the Balkans, that a Roman army would almost always beat a barbarian one in an open battle. The Caesar spent winter 357/358 and 358/359 in Paris, not in one of the traditional centres in the Rhineland, and led his troops out on an easy *razia* into Francia during 358.

Winter 358/359 was again spent in Paris, and at the start of the next campaigning season Julian crossed the Rhine at Mainz, and inflicted a major defeat on several Alamannic kings, publicizing their surrender widely. This self-promotion was more than Constantius, as suspicious as ever, could bear but his replacement of Julian's trusted advisers with new ones he found hateful pushed the Caesar into open revolt. He timed his coup well, after it had become clear that Constantius was suddenly preoccupied by the Persian front for the first time in a decade and would not be able to spare the time to discipline his cousin for his presumption. The proximate cause for the rebellion was the request for a levy of Gallic troops, as mentioned earlier.⁵⁵ The order came in February or March 360, while Julian was still in winter quarters at Paris, and Julian used it as an excuse for a proclamation that he had planned in advance, since he had for the first time taken units of the field army with him to winter quarters. Two of these elite units, the Celtae and Petulantes, were the first to acclaim him Augustus at Paris, but the rest of the Gallic army fell into line at once. Julian did not immediately press for recognition, but instead busied his troops with punitive raiding in Francia. Constantius of course demanded that Julian renounce the title of Augustus and content himself with being Caesar, but in 360, there was little else he could do because of Shapur's determination to harry the eastern frontier. Only late in the winter of 361 did Julian mobilize his army, seeking a *casus belli*, and pursuing a raid on the Alamannic king Vodomarius who, he asserted, had been encouraged by Constantius to attack him. It gave him the excuse he needed to take all of the western Balkans by the end of summer and also secure the garrison cities of northern Italy. The resistance of Aquileia marred the perfect start to civil war. He held off further action until Constantius' hasty truce with Shapur allowed him to mobilize against his cousin, but the death of the legitimate Augustus in November sent Julian on his mad campaign into Persia, with all the damage it would do in the East.

⁵⁵ Amm. Marc. 20.4.3 and above.

STRUCTURAL CONCLUSIONS

The Roman empire under Constantine had a foreign policy: attack, everywhere and often. His sons had no such consistency, not even, as we have noted, anything that can reasonably be termed policy. For the most part, they reacted, which was in part all that they could do because of the need to concentrate on their various intrafamilial struggles. Only when Constantius achieved sole rule and had Julian take control of the Gallic front was there any possibility of coordinated or strategic thought, but Constantius was allergic to grand plans not involving theological conformity. Whether he was simply predisposed to that approach or had learned it through years of dealing with Shapur, lurching from eastern front to internal conflict, is impossible to judge. In some ways, though, after almost twenty years of piecemeal treatment of the frontiers, Constantius' policy hardly mattered. The Persian frontier had long since settled into a permanent low-grade hostility punctuated by major campaigning when neither side was otherwise occupied.⁵⁶ The Balkans remained fundamentally secure—the achievement of Constantine, for the most part. Even the population disturbances at the Danube bend, caused by the cementing of Gothic hegemony further downriver, were essentially small scale and manageable, and the existence of Gothic polities if anything helped keep the peace. The characteristically Roman resort to periodic exemplary violence was really all it took to manage the region's politics. The same had very long been the case in Gaul, and Constantius had found it possible to keep the peace with the usual sorts of punitive expeditions. But the rivalry between regional high commands, and its explosion in the Magnentius revolt, was damaging. By the time Constantius and Julian were in a place to do something, the better part of a decade had passed without serious attention having been paid to Francia or Alamannia. Julian could resume the old routine of annual punishment of the neighbours, but he could not prevent what had traditionally been the least threatening of the European barbarians acting with relative freedom inside the imperial frontiers for extended periods of time. To all intents and purposes, the Gallic frontier of the empire was never again fully under imperial control, and every regime, no matter how active and strategic in other regions, played a basically reactive role in Gaul. That was perhaps the single greatest legacy of the immediately

⁵⁶The sources for the next century are collected and usefully annotated in Greatrex and Lieu 2002.

post-Constantinian decades to the future. Both Balkan and Persian frontiers could have been sustained indefinitely by following the Constantian model of reaction and the periodic controlled offensive; that it was not was the fault of Julian's neglect of the Balkans and disastrous hubris in Persia. Gaul, by the time of Magnentius' defeat, required something more strategic, something more strategic that never came.

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Economy and Society in the Age of the Sons of Constantine

Peter Sarris

In the preface to his *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD*, Peter Brown has written of how we are living in the middle of what he terms a “dam burst in the study of the society and economy of the period”.¹ By virtue of the explosion in late antique studies that has occurred since first Jones and then Brown led the way in English-speaking scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s, many of the academic obstructions that once separated study of the “ancient” world from the “medieval” have indeed come to be broken down, and, as a result, the intellectual landscape is now awash with a vast array of studies of the social, economic, artistic, intellectual and religious life of the era, to such an extent that it is sometimes hard not to be overwhelmed by the sheer proliferation of material.²

¹ Brown 2012: xxvi.

² See Jones 1964; Brown 1971. Note, however, the cautionary comments of Giardina 1999.

P. Sarris (✉)
Trinity College, Cambridge, UK
e-mail: pavs2@cam.ac.uk

Dam bursts may look exhilarating from a distance, but the closer one finds oneself to such an episode, the more disorientating they tend to become. As a result, those inclined to focus on the historiographical breach of recent years perhaps need to be careful not to overlook the beavers of historical convention who, one fears, are already massing on the water's edge, eager to restore the chronological barriers that once bifurcated study of the late Roman world. Likewise, from the distance of modernity, the long birth of medieval Europe may appear a painless affair, and that is certainly how much of the current literature is inclined to depict it.³ It is important, however, not to lose sight of the violence and brutality that the authors of many of our contemporary eyewitness accounts repeatedly associate with the period of transition from the third century to the sixth. If all we ever do is accentuate the positive, then we will never be able to get to grips with the messy reality of late antiquity as it was actually experienced by those who lived through it.

This point comes across very clearly from Brown's discussion of the economic history of the fourth century. As Brown notes, and as shall be returned to shortly, one of the most significant aspects of the economic development of the Roman world in this period, to which the regimes associated with the sons of Constantine were pivotal, was the rapid re-monetization of the Roman economy through the ever greater minting and distribution of the new Constantinian gold coinage, with members of the Roman elite seizing upon the monetary conditions inaugurated by the *solidus* to introduce much more commercialized forms of agriculture on their estates.⁴ This phenomenon was observed, for example, in the late fourth century by Basil of Caesarea, in a homily in which he declared to his wealthy and well-connected congregation, "To what lengths will you not go for gold? Your grain becomes gold for you, your wine solidifies into gold, your wool is transformed into gold; every exchange, every thought, produces gold for you. Gold itself brings forth even more gold, multiplying itself through loans at interest".⁵

The fourth century was, in Brown's words, an *aurea aetas*—an "age of gold"—the economic monetization of which was driven on both by the fiscal demands of the Roman state and by the burgeoning desire for gold

³For notable exceptions, however, see Heather 2005; Ward-Perkins 2005.

⁴This phenomenon is discussed in detail in Banaji 2007 and Sarris 2006.

⁵See *Sancti Basilii Magni Homilia in Illud Lucae, "Destruam Horrea Mea"* in PG 31.3: 261–278 (at 269): translation taken from Schroeder 2009: 65.

on the part of such landowners and imperial functionaries as found themselves subjected to Basil's harangue.⁶ This model has been argued for with great intellectual force by Jairus Banaji, and Brown incorporates much of what Banaji has argued into his vivid depiction of the period: monetization, commercialization, enrichment, economic expansion; such words generate a warm glow.⁷ No doubt the phenomena they describe would have induced a still warmer glow in the hearts of those who enjoyed the proceeds of such economic sophistication and growth, such as the fourth-century teacher and poet Ausonius from Bordeaux, whose family members can be seen to have profited from the expansion of the Roman economy at this time.⁸

Yet Banaji has always emphasized (along with the present author) that these processes came at a price. That price was most obviously paid by those slaves who worked on aristocratic estates (as recently revealed by Karl Harper in his major study of slavery in the late Roman world) and also by the hitherto free farmers and peasants who were drawn onto the commercializing estates of the late Roman aristocracy to work as wage labourers, and who, by virtue of the fact that they agreed to pay their taxes through the figure of the landowner, found themselves bound to such estates, by imperial law, as *coloni adscripticii* or *enapographoi georgoi*, in a legal position *vis-à-vis* their new masters modelled on that between slave and master in the Roman law of persons, with the imperial chancery according landowners extensive rights over such workers and their families which landowners would soon turn to their advantage to exert ever tighter control.⁹ Importantly, it was the commodified nature of the labour provided to landowners by estate *coloni* that led imperial lawmakers to regard their social status as approximating to that of slaves, for Hellenistic and Roman thought had long held that the very act of selling or hiring out one's labour (*locatio operarum*) was by itself sufficient to lead to a loss of status and thus could render one *iuris alieni* (i.e. subject to the legal authority of another).¹⁰

Brown, as just noted, draws upon Banaji's model of a monetizing economy in which highly commercialized estates were expanding. It should be noted, however, that such acceptance is ultimately incompatible with

⁶ Brown 2012: 3.

⁷ Banaji 2007.

⁸ On Ausonius, see the fine pen portrait in Brown 2012: 185–207.

⁹ See Banaji 2009, 2010; Sarris 2011a; Harper 2011.

¹⁰ See Sarris 2011a; Paulus, *Sententiae* 2.18.1.

recent accounts of the late Roman colonate—pioneered by the distinguished French ancient historian Jean-Michel Carrié—which are inclined to depict the slave-like character and dependence of the *colonus* as purely metaphorical, as simply a technicality of late Roman fiscal vocabulary, with no wider social or economic implications.¹¹ In other words, it is not plausible to construct an intellectually coherent account of the fourth century which includes in its analysis major elements of elite-driven economic sophistication and growth, *pace* Banaji, whilst eschewing some of our best evidence for the intensification of exploitation on which such growth was based. Brown is careful to obviate this potential conceptual pitfall, but students and scholars of late antiquity in general need to be careful not to be so mesmerized by the “gain” enjoyed by members of the late Roman governing classes amid the economic transformation of the era that they lose sight of the “pain” inflicted on many of those on whose labours the lifestyle of the elite ultimately depended.¹² As Basil pleaded with his audience in the late fourth century (in words that are perhaps addressable to many historians of late antiquity today): “Yes, while the glitter of gold so allures you, you fail to notice the groans of the needy that follow you around ... How can I bring the sufferings of the poverty-stricken to your attention?”¹³ As Basil reminds us, we need to ask ourselves not only where was the gain, but also where was the pain in late Roman social and economic relations? And how did the distribution of suffering and profit alter in the age of the sons of Constantine? For, we should never forget that, whilst for some, the fourth century may have been an age of gold, for many others, it was an age of sweat.

To Ammianus Marcellinus, looking back on the era between the death of Constantine and the accession of his hero Julian, it was crystal clear how pain and gain had come to be re-distributed by virtue of imperial policy in the middle years of the fourth century. Constantius II, in particular, emerges from his account as a rapacious master, who enriched the state at the expense of its subjects and then used such new-found wealth to line the pockets of the chosen few. Constantius, according to Ammianus, “took no thought for the relief of the provinces when they were oppressed

¹¹ See Carrié 1982; Grey 2007. On the problems of the latter, see Sarris 2011a.

¹² Note Brown 2012: 19–20.

¹³ *S. Basilii Magni Homilia in Illud Lucae, “Destruam Horrea Mea”* in PG 31.3: 268: translation taken from Schroeder 2009: 64.

by multiplied levies and posts”.¹⁴ The main complaint here appears to have been against an overall increase in the tax burden (“the bitterness of the times”, he tells us, “was increased by the insatiate extortion of the tax-collectors, which brought him [the emperor] more hatred than money”), which may have been intensified by virtue of a well-meaning decision of Constantius, taken in 356, that extraordinary or supplementary charges were to be avoided, so as to ensure greater predictability of taxation on the part of tax-payers.¹⁵ If a local emergency or crisis arose, Constantius decreed, the vicar or governor could no longer proceed to simply exact a supplementary levy of his own volition, but rather had to apply to the Praetorian Prefect, who was to report the matter directly to the emperor for confirmation. This would have been a time-consuming procedure, which governors would have been eager to avoid by inflating their initial budgetary predictions so as to cover both foreseeable and unforeseeable costs. As a result, more taxes were probably demanded “up front” than would otherwise have been the case.

Nevertheless, there is every reason to suppose that, irrespective of the edict of 356, the weight of taxation in the mid-fourth century was on the rise, mirroring an increase in governmental expenditure resultant from the expansion of the Roman state that was characteristic of the period.¹⁶ Across the reigns of the sons of Constantine, as Jones noted, “the luxury and splendour of the court increased and palatine services swelled in numbers and received mounting pay and privileges”, a phenomenon which must have increased the fiscal burden on the empire’s tax-payers.¹⁷ But perhaps most suggestive of all is Ammianus’ statement that “if Constantine was the first to open the jaws of his favourites, it was Constantius who stuffed them with the marrow of the provinces”.¹⁸ It was this re-distribution of wealth from tax-payer to emperor and then from emperor to favourite that was at the heart of Ammianus’ critique, and which connected most forcefully the reign of the emperor to the broader social and economic transformation of the Roman world in this period.

This broader transformation that occurred was the result of two distinct processes. First, as is widely acknowledged, the fourth century witnessed a

¹⁴ Amm. Marc. 21.17.

¹⁵ Amm. Marc. 21.17. For the edict, see *Cod. Theod.* 11.16.7–8.

¹⁶ See Sarris 2011a: 377.

¹⁷ Jones 1964: 136.

¹⁸ Amm. Marc. 16.18.12.

dramatic increase in the size of the imperial bureaucracy. In response to a “crisis of under-governance” that had bedevilled emperors amid the military crisis of the third century, rulers from Diocletian onwards considerably expanded the numbers of those provincial administrators and officials (both military and civilian) directly employed by the Roman state.¹⁹ These new posts were primarily recruited for from amongst the ranks of the leading families of the cities of the provinces, whose members were increasingly enrolled into the senatorial order both East and West, and thus came to enter into a new and more direct relationship with imperial power that served to bolster their own resources of authority, prestige and wealth. The holders of these new governmental posts, in short, came to form the kernel of what would become a new imperial aristocracy of service, whose members exercised authority and inter-married at a trans-regional level, thus allowing their power to expand beyond the territorial confines of their home towns.²⁰ As the social and economic clout of members of this newly trans-regional elite snowballed, so too did they increasingly invest their authority and wealth in land, leading to a growing concentration of landownership across the Roman world, which in turn, as noted earlier, would have marked implications for the life of much of the rural population, resulting in the creation of what has been vividly described by Jairus Banaji as “an increasingly proletarianized peasantry”, and seemingly an expansion in agricultural slave labour in those less densely populated areas where landowners could not draw upon extensive pools of potential wage labour.²¹ It is important to note that, as Kyle Harper has highlighted, some of the best evidence we have for rural slavery in the Roman world dates from precisely this period.²²

Second, as again noted earlier, the basis of the Roman monetary economy was transformed. Under both Aurelian and Diocletian, attempts had been made to restore the silver content of the *denarius* so as to render it more stable and reliable as a unit of account and medium of exchange. Under Constantine, however, the process of stabilization was raised to a higher level when the emperor displaced silver from the pinnacle of the Roman monetary system and replaced it with the new gold coinage, the

¹⁹ See Sarris 2011b: 17–32; the chapter by Daniëlle Sloopjes in this volume.

²⁰ See Banaji 2007; Heather 1994; Skinner 2013.

²¹ Banaji 2009: 64; Sarris 2015: 49–54.

²² Harper 2011.

solidus.²³ As Banaji, more than anybody else in recent years has emphasized, the minting and dissemination of these new *solidi* served to transform fiscal and economic relations across the Roman world, as imperial officials and soldiers pressed for the “adaeration” (or rendering into gold) of their stipends and salaries, facilitating a much broader re-monetization of the tax system and hence the broader economy.²⁴ Indeed, the re-monetization of the Roman fiscal system associated with the minting and circulation of the Constantinian *solidus* in the fourth century would appear to have contributed to a wave of economic growth that would enable parts of the late Roman world to achieve levels of economic sophistication and complexity that would not be seen again in parts of Europe until the seventeenth century. This monetary phenomenon would acquire a momentum of its own, such that the dramatic expansion in commercialized and monetized exchange that ultimately occurred at every level of society obliged the imperial authorities to release ever more coinage into circulation, so as to maintain the liquidity of both the public and private economies, with new coinage having to be repeatedly added to old.²⁵

The reign of the emperor Constantius II was to prove pivotal to both these processes, and, crucially, the interaction between them. There are indications, for example, that it was the reign of Constantius II rather than Constantine that witnessed the “take off” of the new gold-based fiscal economy. Thus, for example, it has been estimated that between 346 and 386, the amount of monetized gold in circulation in the empire increased by a factor of twenty.²⁶ From his study of the hoard evidence, Banaji has concluded that “it is clear that the government struck increasingly large quantities of gold in the course of the fourth century. Furthermore, it struck substantially more gold in the latter part of the century than in the former, and it is now possible to date the beginnings of this expansion to the final years of Constantius’ reign ... The ‘total hoard statistic’ suggests a continuous and steady progression for roughly a century ... the overall impression is one of sustained monetary expansion”, which was clearly, at some level, a result of state policy.²⁷

²³ See discussion in Hendy 1985.

²⁴ Banaji 2007.

²⁵ Banaji 2006: 265–270.

²⁶ Banaji 2006: 265–270.

²⁷ Banaji 2007: 49–50.

Any such policy is unlikely to have been driven by anything as abstract as an “economic” or “monetary” theory as such, but rather is likely to have emerged in response to demands and petitions from the provinces and from tax-payers for larger quantities of coin to be released into circulation. There is clear evidence, for example, from a series of laws contained in the *Theodosian Code*, that already by the 360s the demand for coin was outstripping supply, leading to a very high velocity of coinage and significant weight loss on the part of those coins in circulation. Thus, for example, in 363 Julian declared that each city should have appointed to it an official known in Greek as the *zygostates* so as to resolve disputes over the fineness of gold coins (*de qualitate solidorum*), and mentions “light-weight or substandard coins” (*leves vel debiles*) which merchants and handlers of coin were nevertheless obliged to accept.²⁸

Naturally, such shortages of coin would have hampered the effective workings of an increasingly monetized fiscal system, but, crucially, they also served to bolster the economic power and social clout of those members of the salaried imperial bureaucracy—that is to say, of members of the new imperial aristocracy of service—who had privileged access to the gold coinage by virtue of the governmental posts that they held. The gold coinage itself, therefore, became a commodity to be hoarded and manipulated by those who possessed it in the same manner as Roman landowners had long been in the habit of hoarding grain so as to rig prices on the open market. As Basil of Caesarea, yet again, declared to his congregation: “So long as gold remained unearthed in the mines, you scoured the world to find it: but once it came to light, you hid it in the earth again”.²⁹ Gold could be sold to tax-payers who were short of coin to meet the demands of the state at extortionate rates, bolstering an already powerful elite’s resources of patronage and control. As the anonymous author of the *De Rebus Bellicis* would declare of the consequences of the new gold currency, “this store of gold meant that houses of the powerful were crammed full and their splendour enhanced to the destruction of the poor”.³⁰ The functioning of the monetary economy under Constantius II, and the pressing ahead with the adaeration of the fiscal system, thus served to fuel the social and economic ascendancy of the new service elite.

²⁸ See *Cod. Theod.* 12.7.2; discussion in Banaji 2007: 70–71.

²⁹ *Sancti Basilii Magni Homilia in Divites* in PG 31.3: 285: translation taken from Schroeder 2009: 46–47.

³⁰ *De Rebus Bellicis* 2.1–2.

The interests of the new aristocracy of service were also fundamentally advanced in the reign of Constantius II in a number of other crucial respects. First, it is now clearly established that Constantius II's reign was pivotal to the expansion of the Senate of Constantinople, and also to the enrolment onto its lists of members of the new aristocracy of service of the eastern provinces.³¹ These included, for example, a number of high-ranking military office-holders: thus the *duces Aegypti* Syrianus and Flavius Artemius are both recorded to have held the senatorial title of *clarissimi* by 356 and 360, respectively, whilst the military governor of Isauria was, as Banaji has noted, *clarissimus* by 359.³² The office of the count of the largesses (*comes largitionum*) was upgraded at the same time: he was *perfectissimus* in 345 and had attained the clarissimate by 356. This system would be overhauled and rendered more systematic by Valentinian I, but Valentinian was clearly building on foundations essentially established by Constantius II.³³

In 340, as Jones noted, Constantius II had addressed a constitution to the Senate of Constantinople, the city inaugurated a mere decade earlier by Constantine, creating the three annual praetorships, and establishing how much the holders of these offices were to spend on the civic games; in 356, the Senate was allowed to elect its own praetors; in 359, the first Urban Prefect of Constantinople was appointed; in 361 various fiscal privileges were accorded to the city's senators; crucially, in 357 the emperor transferred to the Constantinopolitan Senate those holders of senatorial rank resident in Achaea, Macedonia and Illyricum, whilst its ranks were also filled with growing numbers of new men. From a late fourth-century perspective, membership of the Senate may appear relatively small (Themistius reckoned it at a mere 300), but it was nevertheless a significant development.³⁴

For again, the acquisition of senatorial status helped to bolster the authority and power of such men, not only in Constantinople, but also in the provinces where they would use their economic clout and political connections to build up extensive property portfolios. Members of this new senatorial elite, by virtue of their dual social identity as both representatives of central imperial government and figures of authority and prestige

³¹ See Skinner 2008.

³² Banaji 2007: 50–51.

³³ Banaji 2007: 51.

³⁴ See Jones 1964: 132–133.

in their own right, would come to play a pivotal role in the administration of the empire. Nowhere would this be clearer than with respect to the collection of the imperial taxes on which the state was dependent for its very existence. The holders of senatorial rank would be entrusted with a range of social obligations and duties with respect to the smooth running of the fiscal system. As Peter Heather has put it:

Amongst other things, they were responsible for auditing their local *curiae* and, probably most important of all, for tax equalizations, when tax assessments were adjusted to take account of population and other changes. The *de facto* power generated by the ability to influence one's neighbours' tax assessment can hardly be overstated: as St. Basil of Caesarea put it, control of the tax census gave a man the opportunity to benefit his friends, harm his enemies, and generally make a lot of money.³⁵

It was an especially powerful weapon, of course, if one were minded to drive one's neighbours off their property so as to acquire it for oneself. As Basil declared elsewhere:

[W]hat neighbour, what confidant, what friend is not swept away? Nothing withstands the influence of wealth. Everything submits to its tyranny, everything cowers at its dominion ... Leading yokes of oxen, the wicked plow, sow, and harvest what is not their own. If you dispute with them, they come to blows with you; if you complain, they accuse you of assaulting them. You will be arrested and put in prison; the false accusers are ever ready, ready to place your very life at risk.³⁶

The legal sources would appear to suggest that already by the later years of Constantius II's reign, the growing resources of power and patronage at the disposal of members of the new elite were beginning to have an increasingly destabilizing effect on agrarian social relations, much after the manner described for later in the century by Basil of Caesarea, with agricultural workers being both drawn to and attempting to flee from the expanding estates. In 360, for example, Constantius II was obliged to legislate against the illicit migration of agricultural workers who were being drawn away from their taxpaying village communities by powerful

³⁵ Heather 1994: 28.

³⁶ *Sancti Basilii Magni Homilia in Divites* in PG 31.3: 294–295: translation taken from Schroeder 2009: 51.

patrons holding high governmental and military office, thereby initiating the series of imperial constitutions on rural patronage (*de patrociniis vicorum*) that provides some of our most vivid evidence for the growth of large estates in late antiquity.³⁷ This process of estate expansion would soon be reflected in both the documentary and epigraphic evidence for provinces stretching from Egypt to Asia Minor.³⁸ By the middle of the fourth century, a progressive concentration of landownership was evidently underway, although, for many, the pain that this would generate was—as yet—postponed.

If agrarian social relations in the age of Constantius II were beginning to show signs of the strains generated by the processes of elite formation unleashed by the administrative and monetary reforms of the era, so too were the cities of the empire. One of the overriding administrative objectives of emperors of the period was to prevent members of the expanding senatorial order, and those who were being drawn away from their native cities by governmental service, from neglecting or abandoning their curial responsibilities.³⁹ As early as 340, for example, the emperor Constantine had moved to reassure the council of Cirta in Numidia that no city councillor would be allowed to abandon their native council and enter the senatorial order before they had held the city magistracies and fulfilled all the obligations expected of them.⁴⁰ Likewise, in 361, Constantius II issued a harshly worded measure to the Senate of Constantinople, expelling former *curiales*.⁴¹ It would not be until the late fifth century that this problem would finally be resolved, but again, it was at this point that the issue emerged to the fore.⁴² As Jones noted, “the infiltration of *curiales* into the senate was a more dangerous development than their acquisition of equestrian rank or the *comitiva* (whereby individuals had hitherto sought to evade curial obligations). For the latter were personal honours, which did not affect the status of the recipients’ sons, whereas senatorial rank was hereditary”.⁴³

The expansion of the Roman state and the monetary reforms of the era thus served to fundamentally advance the interests of members of the late Roman aristocracy of service in the age of the sons of Constantine. But as

³⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 11.24.1. See discussion in Sarris 2006: 186–190.

³⁸ On Egypt, see Sarris 2006: 177–181; for Asia Minor, see Harper 2008.

³⁹ See Liebeschuetz 2001; Skinner 2013.

⁴⁰ See Jones 1964: 136.

⁴¹ Jones 1964: 136.

⁴² Laniado 2002.

⁴³ Jones 1964: 136.

we have seen, Ammianus, in his critique of the regime of Constantius II, describes something much more deliberate and calculated to have taken place: to repeat the quotation, “if Constantine was the first to open the jaws of his favourites, Constantius stuffed them with the marrow of the provinces”. Was this simply generic abuse, directed at an emperor of whom he did not approve, or was Ammianus perhaps here getting at something more specific? Is there any more concrete way in which Constantius II can be seen to have materially advanced the interests of chosen members of the new elite?

Emphasis is still sometimes placed—generally by economic historians rather than by historians of religion—on Constantine’s confiscation of temple treasures supposedly so as to provide some of the wherewithal for his new gold currency. The anonymous author of the *De Rebus Bellicis*, whom we should take seriously as a witness to economic affairs, suggests, however, that some of the temple treasures were effectively given away to sections of the population: thus he writes of how “when the gold and silver and the huge quantity of precious stones which had been stored away in the temples long ago reached the public (*ad publicum pervenisset*), they kindled all men’s possessive and spendthrift instincts”.⁴⁴ The implication must be, to some extent at least, that the “dissolution of the temple treasures” was used to buy up support for the new regime, especially in the East, to which Constantine had effectively come as a political outsider, and where he had been obliged to build up new networks of political support from scratch in a world where fond memories of Licinius may well have lingered on.⁴⁵

Constantius II’s needs were not so great, but there are signs that he too may have appreciated the political benefits of appealing to the material interests of his leading provincial subjects. There are clear indications, for example, that, towards the end of his reign, the emperor initiated a significant (although not total) expropriation of rural estates belonging to the cities of the empire, which passed into the ownership of the crown estate (*res privata*) as public land (*fundi iuris reipublicae*).⁴⁶ At face value, this may look like an attempt to bolster what might be termed the “imperial desmesne” and thus shore up the economic basis of the imperial household to provide the emperor with greater political autonomy, such as we

⁴⁴ *De Rebus Bellicis* 2.3.

⁴⁵ See Heather 1994.

⁴⁶ See Jones 1964: 131.

encounter in the reign of the emperor Justinian I (527–565).⁴⁷ This would not, however, appear to have been entirely the case. For, as a number of constitutions contained in the *Theodosian Code* reveal, what the emperor was actually doing was using the *res privata* as a sort of “clearing house” for recycling the ownership of estates, after a manner that anticipated and perhaps informed the practices of subsequent Byzantine emperors down to the Comnenian period of the eleventh century and beyond.⁴⁸ For one of the other great abuses of Constantius’ reign, against which Ammianus Marcellinus especially rails (far more so than he does, as Jones noted, against taxation), was the large-scale issuing to private individuals of lands belonging to the *res privata* (including land from the *fundi iuris reipublicae* and the *fundi iuris templorum*).⁴⁹ The main recipients of such imperial grants are represented as being *comites* and *palatini*—that is to say, they were favoured members of the new service aristocracy. This policy is reminiscent, in an English context, of the way in which Henry VIII would use land derived from the estates of the dissolved monasteries to secure support amongst the Tudor gentry and nobility, gifting it to chosen favourites.⁵⁰

Henry gave away a lot of monastic land, but much more of it he sold for cash to new men on the make. Importantly, there are signs that even prior to the incorporation of the civic properties, Constantius II and his household used the *res privata* to do the same. In 341, for example, Constantius and Constans issued a constitution confirming the rights of ownership of those who had recently purchased landholdings from the *fundi rei privatae* and woodland from the *domus divina*; a subsequent law from the same year records that imperial landholdings and villas had been put up for auction and transferred to the highest bidder, only for the newly acquired properties to be put back on the market by imperial officials, presumably because their original buyers had found themselves suddenly gazumped by a determined purchaser arriving late on the scene and offering still more money.⁵¹ The auctioning off of these lands to members of the provincial elite would continue through to the reigns of Valentinian I and Valens, and included lands described as “rich and fertile” such that,

⁴⁷ Sarris 2006: 215.

⁴⁸ See discussion in Sarris 2012: 433–434.

⁴⁹ Jones 1964: 131.

⁵⁰ See Heal and Holmes 1994: 324–328.

⁵¹ *Cod. Theod.* 5.13.1–2.

by the end of the century, emperors would complain that all that remained in the control of the state were inferior and unproductive estates.⁵²

Such complaints, of course, are likely to have been hyperbolic, but what is significant is that, at a crucial point in the mid-fourth century, the imperial authorities can be seen to have given the new holders of the gold coinage a means of investing their monetary wealth in land, and thereby may have helped to further set in motion the process of aristocratic enrichment that was to prove to be such a significant feature of the age. This redistribution of the resources amassed by the *res privata*, in short, may have made an important contribution to the economic enrincination of the new service elite in provincial landed society. Certainly, rulers in the 360s were to prove sensitive to the commercial instincts and aspirations of the new generation of landowners who were emerging to the fore in this age of gold: in a law of 364, for example, Valentinian and Valens chose to exempt from the *collatio lustralis* or tax on mercantile profits those who marketed the produce of their own estates: such men, the constitution declared, “should be thought of not so much as merchants, but rather as skilled and zealous masters”⁵³.

The years between the death of Constantine in 337 and the accession of Julian in 361, therefore, were pivotal to the social and economic formation of the late Roman world, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean. The opening up of the senatorial order to the holders of the new higher civilian and military posts helped to consolidate and entrench the social ascendancy of members of the new imperial aristocracy of service, whilst the creation and expansion of the Constantinopolitan Senate served to give a growing focus and cohesion to the governing classes of the eastern provinces that would ultimately help to bind together the early Byzantine world. In economic terms, the expansion of an increasingly monetized fiscal economy based on gold helped to further serve the interests of members of the new service elite, whilst a series of remarkable alienations of land derived from city, temple and crown helped to catalyse the process whereby that same emergent elite would begin to win mastery of landed society. The dividing line between winners and losers in the age of the sons of Constantine was one that would primarily be determined in terms of access to gold and access to the court. For the winners, the scale of the possible proceeds of success were only just starting to become apparent,

⁵² *Cod. Theod.* 5.13.40.

⁵³ *Cod. Theod.* 5.14.33.1.

whilst for the losers (not least amongst the peasantry) the worst was yet to come, as the excoriating social critiques embedded in the outpouring of homiletic literature one encounters in the late fourth and early fifth centuries written by the likes of Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Shenout and other anonymous authors of the era would so vividly reveal.⁵⁴

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⁵⁴ See, for example, in addition to Schroeder 2009; Roth 1981; Brakke and Crislip 2015; Morris 1965.

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PART IV

Religion and Culture



“I Have Taken Pains to Get Copies
of Them” (Athanasius, *De Synodis* 55):
Epistolary Relations Between the Sons
of Constantine and the Christian Church

Nicholas Baker-Brian

INTRODUCTION

One of the surest signs that the fortunes of Christianity had changed under Constantine, according to Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History*, was that the emperor began to send personal letters (lit. “from the person” of the emperor) regularly to bishops. In the final book of his *History*, Eusebius discloses his intention to engrave (ἐγχαράξαι) “as if on a sacred stele” (ὥσπερ ἐν ἱερᾷ στήλῃ: 10.2.2) such imperial texts for the sake of future generations.¹ Towards the end of this final book (10.5–7), Eusebius included six examples of imperial correspondence—of which only three are addressed directly to bishops—which, he indicated,

¹ Following the edition and translation by Oulton and Lawlor 1932.

N. Baker-Brian (✉)
Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
e-mail: Baker-briannjl@cardiff.ac.uk

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illustrated the benefits of the peace brought by Constantine to all humanity (10.8.1–2).² Eusebius was similarly reliant on letters from Constantine to bishops in his *Life of Constantine*, a number of which were addressed to Eusebius himself. These letters appear for the most part like many other personal letters from the period: they include greeting and farewell statements and refer to addressees in the second person. They stand in contrast to the third-person formality of other imperial missives, for example, the “epistolary edict” utilised by emperors from the late third century onwards.³ Constantine’s letter to the bishops of Palestine, addressed in the main to Macarius as the bishop of Jerusalem and preserved by Eusebius in the third book of his *Life* in the context of Eusebius’ account of the emperor’s church building initiatives (*Vit. Const.* 3.52.1–53.4), is arguably the best example of what Eusebius classified as a personal letter from the emperor.⁴ The letter’s personal orientation is revealed in the first instance by its technical features: the dative case is used in the address line and Constantine addresses the bishops in the second person throughout the letter. It closes with a “Christian” valediction, “God preserve you, dear brothers”. The contents of the letter, while not exactly “personal”, nonetheless convey the substance of the emperor’s own thoughts on a matter of religious policy, namely his interest in correcting Christian attitudes to Mamre as a holy site by preserving its topographic significance in the landscape of the newly discovered Christian “Holy Land” through the commission of a grandiose basilica on the site.⁵ He chastises the Palestinian bishops for their failure to prevent the defilement of Mamre with idols and altars ready for sacrifice—held to be the place where God appeared to Abraham—which Constantine’s mother-in-law, Eutropia (the wife of Maximian and the mother of Fausta), had alerted the emperor to in her letters.⁶ Its “reasoned admonition” (*Vit. Const.* 3.51.2) stood in contrast—so noted Eusebius—to the imperial mandates directed to provincial governors about the condition of the site, whereby Constantine granted Macarius and the other bishops authority over Acacius, the civil administrator, in the construction of a basilica on the site. Beyond the evident appeal which Constantine’s letter held for Eusebius through its grant of

² On these documents, see Carotenuto 2002.

³ See Corcoran 2000: 123–169; Dillon 2012: 35–59.

⁴ Translations from Euseb., *Vit. Const.*, are taken from Cameron and Hall 1999. The edition followed is Winkelmann 2008.

⁵ On Mamre in the Constantinian period, see Hunt 1982: 102–104.

⁶ For Eutropia and Mamre see also the chapter by Shaun Tougher in this volume.

this mandate to himself and the circle of Palestinian bishops, the writings of Eusebius provide an early indication of the way in which letters from the emperor counted as prestigious items which those in possession of were justifiably keen to promote.⁷

Eusebius’ metaphor in his *Ecclesiastical History* was well chosen. The transfer of an official document—for example, a treaty, a decree, or an imperial letter—onto a stele represented a deliberately selective and monumental act intended to enhance the status of the individual, group, or community in receipt of the text.⁸ Arising from the reconfigured relations between the emperor and the Christian church under Constantine, the citation of imperial letters by Christian authors increased perceptibly during the course of the mid-fourth century. During this period bishops, along with other elite members of Roman society, developed an interest in “the materiality of words and objects emanating from the Emperor”.⁹ This growing interest gave rise to a culture of “epistolarity”, a term which in previous studies has been defined in something of an open-ended manner,¹⁰ but which I use in this chapter to refer not only to the industry arising from being a correspondent, but also to describe the tendency to utilise letters—be they synodal, imperial, or other kinds of letters—within other texts for specific reasons. By citing letters from the emperor and other authors in their own works, Christian authors very often altered the significant meaning of imperial texts by placing them in new contexts and by bringing them into the service of situations and arguments not originally envisaged by their imperial authors. With this in mind, acknowledging the epistolarity of Christian literature in the mid-fourth century identifies the imperial letter, in the generic sense, as a dynamic medium rather than a static medium in the terms discussed by Doron Mendels.¹¹ In the case of the former category, Mendels notes that there is “a continuing communicative interaction between communicator and recipient”, in contrast to the latter category in which “in this kind of communication no ongoing active role was required on the part of either communicator or recipient”.¹² Indeed, Patristic authors of the period provide ancient historians with a rare opportunity to study how imperial texts

⁷ See the assessment of Millar 1977: 472.

⁸ See the remarks by Cooley 2012: 222. Cf. Elm 2012: 344–348.

⁹ Weisweiler 2015: 34–35.

¹⁰ Altman 1982: 3–12; Schneider 2005: 37–55.

¹¹ Mendels 1999: 1–30.

¹² Mendels 1999: 4.

were received by an increasingly important section of the empire's population.

Inspired by the emergent epistolarity during the reign of Constantine as evidenced in the works of Eusebius of Caesarea, this chapter analyses epistolary relations between bishops and the sons of Constantine—by his second wife Fausta¹³—who took over the running of the empire within months of their father's death in May 337. It contends that this period—in particular the reign of Constantius II as Augustus (*r.* 337–361)—witnessed the flowering of an epistolary culture in which the exchange and promotion of letters between the Constantinian emperors and the bishops of the Christian church served as an acute influence on the events and attitudes of the middle decades of the fourth century. The broader context for these instances of exchange and display lay in the complex Christian factionalism that marked the final years of Constantine's reign and the subsequent reigns of his sons when, in the assessment of Richard Vaggione, “public ecclesiastical identity tended to be expressed in terms of political and theological loyalty to specific bishops”.¹⁴ A resultant outcome of this time was a “war of pamphlets” between opposing parties. Very many of the apologies, episcopal letters, conciliar documents, historical works, and related treatises written in this environment of factionalism convey a bitterly confrontational tone, and imperial letters were frequently and unceremoniously dragged into the conflict to defend or defame individuals or parties. Documents emanating from the heart of the imperial government may indeed have been judged as sacred,¹⁵ but this did not stop them from being exploited by Christian writers for the sake of making or indeed winning arguments. This chapter will argue that imperial letters which dealt with religious matters together with synodal letters (the “final reports”¹⁶ of ecclesiastical councils) from the time of Constantine's successors represent communicative texts concerned with defining the boundaries of legitimacy on matters of imperial authority, religious belief, and clerical privilege. Both types represented related yet distinct forms of authority, which were sometimes in agreement over issues, and sometimes polarised. These letters represent key stages—sometimes final, sometimes intermediate—in the prolonged process of negotiation between the emperor and his

¹³For Constantine's marriages, see Barnes 1982: 42–43.

¹⁴Vaggione 2000: 151.

¹⁵Weisweiler 2015: 34.

¹⁶MacMullen 2006: 35.

advisers, and the Christian church undertaken during the 330s–350s, which was played out in a variety of public arenas (synods) and in private, petitionary meetings between individual bishops and the imperial court. Both epistolary types frequently betray the influence of one on the other. Concepts and categories arising from the negotiation of authority, for example, the use of terms relating to the creation of social boundaries conveyed in alteritous language and/or in legal-rhetorical categories such as infamy, are recognisable in the imperial and synodal letters of the period, and as such presage the conceptualisation of illegitimate Christianity and illegitimate Christians in the religious legislation of the Valentinian and Theodosian emperors in the later fourth and early fifth centuries.¹⁷ The reigns of Constantine’s sons should, therefore, be deemed instrumental in the process outlined by David Hunt, namely that the imperial and synodal letters from the time of Constans and Constantius II represent vital evidence for contextualising the later “imperial pronouncements which make the true faith of Christianity into a matter of official legislation and ... [a] legitimate ‘religio’”.¹⁸

Like all Roman emperors, Constantine’s sons were compelled *ex officio* to correspond daily with a range of imperial office-holders and private citizens.¹⁹ While the bulk of the administrative labour was performed by his secretaries and members of the consistory, this chapter works with the premise that the emperor was involved with the composition of certain letters, the extent of his involvement dependent on the importance of the issues at hand. In this regard, Simon Corcoran’s general rule of imperial authorship serves as a guide for approaching the letters sent by the sons of Constantine to the bishops of the Christian church, namely that “the more important the subject matter and the more significant the recipient, the greater the emperor’s personal involvement will have been, even if he only indicated the principal points he wished to include in his reply”.²⁰ Since this chapter examines the letters of Constantine’s sons—predominantly those of Constantius II—addressed either to bishops directly or to their churches on matters deemed to be of the highest importance to the state (e.g. the exile of key clerics and the subsequent civil disturbances arising from their exiles), it is a reasonable assumption that the emperor’s

¹⁷ See especially Barnard 1995.

¹⁸ Hunt 2010: 150.

¹⁹ Cf. Trapp 2012: 108–109.

²⁰ Corcoran 2014: 187.

“voice” can be heard in a significant number of the correspondence examined below. The letters issued by Constantine’s sons conveying general laws—which in nearly all instances were redacted prior to their inclusion in the Theodosian and Justinianic Codes—have been exhaustively analysed by Paola Ombretta Cuneo.²¹ By contrast, this chapter analyses the imperial letters preserved in Christian sources from the period.²² These have received comparatively little attention from moderns. (For the sake of this chapter, I work with the premise that these letters are genuine with a lineage traceable to the imperial office. Further studies may, however, prove otherwise.) Imperial letters, synodal letters, and a variety of related correspondence comprise the glue holding together many historical and theological works from this period. Like most things integral, however, such letters have tended to be passed over with very little comment.

This chapter, therefore, has two principal concerns. In the first instance to examine the circumstances surrounding the reception and promotion of letters from Constantine’s sons by Christian writers of the fourth century. And in the second instance to analyse some of the concerns of the imperial letters themselves. The second section of this chapter begins by considering some of the reasons for the emerging patristic interest in the “materiality” of the emperor’s words in the decades post-Constantine of the 340s–350s. In light of his influence on the events affecting the Christian church and its relationship with the imperial government of the Constantinian dynasty, Athanasius of Alexandria’s attitude towards letters from emperors and his promotion of those documents in his own writings—his epistolarity—will be front and centre in the first part of this section. Taking as valid the idea that those writers who engaged in the “steleographic habit” did so to enhance their own profile and their own causes by promoting their receipt of letters from the emperor, it is possibly a surprising discovery that Athanasius also promoted letters from Constantius II that were openly hostile to him in writings composed and edited soon after the start of his third period in exile (356–362). It will become clear, however, that he did so to promote his status as a bishop forced out of his see by an emperor who, in Athanasius’ estimation, had become transformed into a tyrant responsible for persecuting the true

²¹ See especially the discussion in Cuneo 1997: xcvi–cxviii.

²² Virtually all the Constantinian letters in Patristic sources are translated and collected in Coleman-Norton 1966. I have used Coleman-Norton’s translations throughout this chapter: minor alterations are noted.

servants of the Church as a result of his patronage of the “heretical” bishops of the eastern empire. Athanasius’ promotion of Constantius’ defamatory letters thus enabled the bishop to construct an image of himself as a deeply pious Christian leader under attack from his imperially sponsored enemies.

The factionalising tendencies within the Church which emerged after Nicaea were exacerbated by the administrative division of the empire introduced by Constantine’s sons in the late summer of 337.²³ The splits in the Church may have begun as a result of competing ideas sparked by the teachings of Arius over the Son’s nature in relation to God the Father, but they quickly developed into infighting about the theologies and the (alleged or real) crimes and misdemeanours of members of competing episcopal networks (the one led for a short while by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, which was set against the one led by Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra) which have become traditionally represented—not entirely accurately, it should be said—along regional lines.²⁴ The consolidation of imperial support behind these factions characterised the period after the death in 340 of Constantine’s eldest son by Fausta, Constantine II, when Constans and Constantius were divided over their support for these competing networks. One of the consequences arising from Constans’ murder in January 350 by Magnentius’ agents²⁵ was that the western bishops sympathetic to the dominant anti-Eusebian figures—Athanasius, Marcellus, and Paul of Constantinople—were deprived of their imperial champion. This provided impetus to those eastern bishops who were able—for most of the time, at least—to count Constantius as a kind of patron, and who drew on his influence to secure the banishment of their opponents, to be replaced by bishops who were aligned with their own networks and theological ideas. For those bishops who found themselves deposed and with little or no support among the patronised networks, their response was to configure their identity in light of the historic experience of the Christian church of the pre-Constantinian period, as an institution persecuted by the Roman state.²⁶ The final years of Constantius’ rule witnessed the emergence of literary works which, although only a handful in number, marked a dramatic change in the hitherto effusive language employed by

²³ Cf. Vaggione 2000: 150–152.

²⁴ See Parvis 2006: 134–252.

²⁵ See Harries 2012: 195–196.

²⁶ See especially Flower 2013: 78–126.

Christian authors to express the alignment of ecclesiastical ambitions with imperial support, in the era of the “Constantinian turn”. These works of Christian invective adopted a bellicose tone towards Constantius, styling him as a tyrant and persecuting emperor. These invectives written by bishops deposed under Constantius—namely, Hilary of Poitiers, Athanasius, and Lucifer of Cagliari—have been lately analysed by Richard Flower in his 2013 monograph. Little has been said more broadly, however, about the possible impetus which the defamatory and criminalising tone of imperial letters from these years aimed at individual bishops (roughly from 355 onwards) may have had on the genesis of Christian invectives against the emperor.

Constantius’ hostile letters against major figures in the Nicene camp—including Liberius, bishop of Rome, and Athanasius—thereby provide the point of departure for the third and final section of the chapter. The state correspondence discussed here presents an opportunity to assess the extent to which Constantius developed the epistolary rhetoric of Constantine and his consistory on religious, theological, and ecclesiastical matters, in addition to recognising Constantius’ extension of his father’s concerns about Christianity in ways which presaged the legislative language of later emperors from the fourth and fifth centuries.

EPISCOPAL PROMOTION OF LETTERS FROM EMPERORS

On certain occasions, a position of indifference in response to a display of patronage may be read as a form of satire. An episode in the Greek *Life of Antony*—attributed to Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria²⁷—portrays the holy man offering the “cold shoulder” to the epistolary attentions of Constantine and his sons.²⁸

Antony’s fame spread even to rulers. When Constantine Augustus and his sons Constantius Augustus and Constans Augustus learned of these things [i.e. Antony’s feats], they wrote to him as a father and begged to receive responses from him. He did not, however, make a great deal of the writings,

²⁷ See now Barnes 2010: 160–170. For a summary of the arguments surrounding the primacy of the Greek text of the *Life* and its Athanasian attribution, see Leemans 2000: 154–159.

²⁸ *Life of Antony* 81.1–6. I have amended the translation by Gregg 1980 following the edition of the Greek *Life* by Bartelink 2004. Cf. Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.8.

nor did he rejoice over the letters; rather, he was just as he had been before the emperors wrote to him. He preferred not to receive the letters, saying that he did not know how to respond to such things.

While the scenario conjured up by this passage is undoubtedly fictive, the anecdote, nevertheless, owes something to the circumstances and attitudes of individuals in receipt of imperial letters. Within the context of the *Life*, Antony’s reimagined vision of a *politeia* comprising citizenship of a heavenly rather than an earthly kind underpinned the ascetic’s indifference to receiving personal letters from the Constantinian emperors. The anecdote offers a point of contrast not only to the expressions of esteem commonly accompanying the reception of imperial texts in Christian literature, but also to the actual situation whereby members of the church regularly petitioned the emperor over a range of matters.²⁹ Although fanciful, the passage from the *Life* conveys one way in which letters from the emperor could be handled in a dynamic fashion—in this case, initially ignored—according to the circumstances of their recipient. Christian authors became especially adept at recognising the value of letters from the emperor as rhetorical resources to be deployed when circumstances demanded. Athanasius of Alexandria understood this situation better than most. A number of Athanasius’ writings attest to his willingness to utilise a range of epistolary texts—synodal and imperial—in a variety of contexts, largely to provide “proofs” (ἀπόδειξις; *Defence Before Constantius* 1.1) to rebut a series of charges—including the murder of an Egyptian clergyman and the desecration of a chalice—brought by his opponents, whom Athanasius styled as “those around Eusebius [bishop of Nicomedia]” and who were alleged by him to be the principal propagators of the “Arian” heresy. Indeed, the polemical turn of Athanasius’ account lay in the repeated accusation that the “Arians” were persecuting him directly as part of an “anti-Nicene” purge of the church.³⁰

Athanasius was deposed from Alexandria on a total of five occasions.³¹ On a basic level he required access to imperial letters in order to remain informed about the decisions of Constans (up to his assassination in 350) and Constantius II on the issues affecting the church. This is evident from the postscript to his work, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* from

²⁹ See Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 2.31.2–3, for an account of Antony writing frequently to Constantine after the exile of Athanasius to Trier in 336; see Barnes 1993: 97.

³⁰ See now Gwynn 2007: 59–87.

³¹ Gwynn 2007: 4–5.

the year 359,³² where Athanasius records his efforts to get hold of letters for his supporters which had been sent by Constantius to the western bishops gathered at Ariminum in northern Italy.³³ In the case of the imperial correspondence arising from the machinations at Ariminum, these letters were likely publicly available documents which circulated with other materials relating to the decisions of the council. Nevertheless, Athanasius still appeared to have had difficulty in obtaining copies of them.³⁴ The postscript preserves the letter of Constantius II to members of the Ariminum synod—in which the emperor declares that he has been unable to meet with delegates because he had been preparing for “a necessary expedition against the barbarians [against Persia] ... [and so] it is fitting to have a soul clear from every care, when one handles matters of the divine law”—together with the reply from the bishops.³⁵ During the period of his third exile from 356 to 362, Athanasius became increasingly hostile in literary terms towards Constantius II. Explanations for Athanasius’ hostility to this son of Constantine are complex and not wholly opaque.³⁶ In broad terms, the loss of Athanasius’ imperial champion in the guise of Constans in 350 and the relative freedom granted to Constantius as sole ruler in the following decade precipitated decisions which aggravated Athanasius and those bishops sympathetic to him. In specific terms, Athanasius had lost his see to George “the Cappadocian” in February 356 in acrimonious circumstances spearheaded by senior officials from the civil administration.³⁷ Athanasius’ literary bile simmered for a portion of this period until it boiled over in his *History of the Arians*, which contains his infamous portrait of Constantius II as an illegitimate ruler, whose reign was judged adversely in contrast to that of his father and younger brother, Constans (*History of the Arians* 49–51).³⁸

However, for a substantial period Athanasius referred to Constantius in favourable terms and was indeed substantially reliant on personal letters from the emperor in building his case against his opponents. This reliance is demonstrated clearly in his *Apology Against the Arians* (*Apologia contra*

³²Translations from Athanasius’ works are mainly by Robertson 1892. Occasionally I have used Coleman-Norton 1966 for the imperial texts in Athanasius. Minor changes are noted.

³³See Hanson 1988: 348–386. Also Diefenbach 2015.

³⁴Cf. Sotinel 2004.

³⁵On the circumstances surrounding Constantius’ letter, see Hanson 1988: 376–378.

³⁶See Gwynn 2007: 151–158.

³⁷See Barnes 1993: 118–120.

³⁸See Flower 2013: 89–97.

Arianos, sometimes referred to as *Apologia secunda*). The *Apology* is a complex text redacted by Athanasius at various stages in his career (“basically a document composed between 347–350”³⁹). It has traditionally (and rightly) been characterised as “an assemblage of documents of varying dates and authorship connected by an Athanasian narrative”⁴⁰; however, it should also be viewed as a formative example of the use to which imperial and synodal letters—which form the bulk of the documents utilised by Athanasius in the work—were put in order to shape literary responses to the patronage shown by the emperor and the imperial government to the Church. The form of the *Apology* was determined by its purpose, this being to offer Athanasius’ episcopal opponents a rebuttal of the charges they had brought against him with supporting documentation supplied by emperors (Constantine, Constantine II [as Caesar] and Constantius II)⁴¹ and bishops (seemingly) sympathetic to his circumstances. The work thereby *evolved* as epistolary material favourable to Athanasius became available to him. Following the plausible reconstruction of the *Apology*’s composition proposed by Timothy Barnes,⁴² it appears that Athanasius included the letters sent to him by Constantius II (preserved in chapter fifty-one of the *Apology*) in the period following the ecumenical Council held in Serdica in the province of Illyricum in the late summer of 343,⁴³ in the version of the *Apology* presented to the Council of Antioch in 349. The context for this latter council can be traced back to the decisions reached by the western delegates of the Council of Serdica, principally their decision to dismiss out of hand the charges against Athanasius and recall him to Alexandria, and the seismic fallout from these decisions in the years following the failed ecumenical council. While Athanasius had been recalled by Constantius to Alexandria in 346, he was soon under pressure again to defend himself in the face of an increasingly confident Constantius.⁴⁴ While Athanasius redacted his *Apology* in order to present his innocence afresh for the sake of the Council of Antioch in 349,

³⁹ Barnes 1993: 99, and also 192–195; cf. Gwynn 2007: 16–19.

⁴⁰ Gwynn 2007: 16.

⁴¹ For Athanasius’ handling of letters from Constantine in the *Apology*, see Barnard 1992: 107–113.

⁴² Barnes 1993: 99, 192–195.

⁴³ Concerning Serdica, see Barnard 1983. Also Brennecke et al. 2007: 179–279.

⁴⁴ For the details see Barnes 1993: 97–99.

it did him little good: he was soon condemned by the Antiochene council composed of bishops who to a man were hostile to him.⁴⁵

The *Apology Against the Arians* illustrates well how events shaped the epistolarity of Athanasius.⁴⁶ At the time that the re-edited *Apology* was published to coincide with the Council of Antioch, Athanasius did not have Constantius II in his sights as the principal instigator of the persecution against him and his associates: as David Gwynn has demonstrated, the apportioning of blame on imperial shoulders was to emerge only (and in varying degrees) in the works produced during his third exile.⁴⁷ Thus, it is only from the writings of this time, principally in the *History of the Arians* (c. 357), that we begin to appreciate the extent of the violence and sanctions meted out by the opposing parties in the period immediately following Serdica, even when the bloody hyperbole of Athanasius' testimony and apportioning of blame to Constantius have been duly considered. The circulation of narratives alleging historic acts of extreme violence between eastern and western episcopal parties and their supporters became a prominent feature of the episcopal factionalism of Constantius' final years. Highlighting the origin of these narratives in the policies and subsequent actions of the emperor and his court thereby became a central concern for Athanasius in the late 350s. And yet, epistolary texts composed by delegates attending the Council of Serdica portray the frenzied atmosphere of the time. The synodal letter of the western bishops attending Serdica alleged that after the eastern bishops had fled (*fugierunt*) from the city, the returning exiles to the West attested to their violent treatment at the hands of the party in flight: the death of Theodulus, the bishop of Trajanople in Thrace, is especially noted as he fled the violence of the easterners.⁴⁸ In the *Defence of His Flight* (357), and with greater detail in the *History of the Arians*, Athanasius lists the fates of those eastern bishops who transferred their sympathies to the western party at Serdica. Among them Athanasius identifies Theodulus, along with another Thracian bishop, Olympius of Aenus. Athanasius notes that "the Eusebians" brought false charges against the two bishops to Constantius II, who in reply wrote an epistolary

⁴⁵ Attested in Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 4.8.3–4. For comment, see Barnes 1993: 98–99.

⁴⁶ Utilising the edition by Opitz 1938.

⁴⁷ Gwynn 2007: 154.

⁴⁸ Athanasius preserves the Greek version of this encyclical in the *Apology Against the Arians* 42.1–47.6. The Latin version is preserved in Hilary of Poitiers' *Historica Fragmenta CSEL* 65.103.5–126.3; trans. Wickham 1997: 41–47. For comments about its preservation and contents, see Barnard 1992: 82–91.

judgement setting out the terms of both bishops’ expulsions from their churches and cities; furthermore, Athanasius added that if they chose not to comply with the orders, this would result in their beheading. A virtually identical capital order was also issued against Athanasius himself and his associates in Alexandria should they contravene the sentences of their exiles, the licence for which—as far as Athanasius was concerned—had been supplied by the western bishops’ decision at Serdica. Imperial warrants sanctioning the execution of all these bishops were issued to officials soon after the end of the council. In a remarkable episode evidently related to these events, the citizens of Adrianople refused to hold communion with the eastern bishops returning from Philippopolis, likely because they were showing support for their deposed bishop, Lucius, who had sought an alliance with the western bishops even before Serdica had begun. The clergy reported the disobedience to Constantius II. The outcome was the beheading of ten workers from Adrianople’s munitions factory. Thus, keeping in mind Athanasius’ efforts in pointing out the guiding hand of imperial tyranny behind this sectarian violence, it is, nonetheless, incontrovertible that the emperor did in fact elevate his involvement in deciding the fates of recalcitrant eastern bishops whose allegiances had lain with the western half of Serdica. As Alexander Skinner has rightly noted, “[in] 343, the limits of clemency had also become clear. Troublesome clerics in the East began to face their doom”.⁴⁹

The bloody events of the post-Serdican period were, however, ignored in the version of the *Apology Against the Arians* presented to the Council of Antioch in 349. Instead, the focus for much of the *Apology*’s central chapters (36–58) lay with the letters clearing Athanasius of the charges brought against him by his eastern opponents. The *Apology*’s epistolarity thereby shaped the nature of the work and the representation of the events it narrated. Letters were selected according to the due weight of authority which they lent to Athanasius’ defence. In this regard, Athanasius assembled a barrage of supporting texts noting, prior to their citation, “[t]he following are the letters written in my favour (ὕπερ ἡμῶν) by the bishops in the several councils” (*Apology* 3.1). Building up to the production of letters from Constantius himself, Athanasius began with the lengthy encyclical letter of the Council of Egypt in 339 (likely written by Athanasius himself; 3.1–19.5), followed by Pope Julius’ letter to the eastern bishops

⁴⁹ Skinner 2015: 248.

gathered in Antioch after the Council of Rome in 341 (21.1–35.8).⁵⁰ Athanasius then incorporated similarly supportive texts including the letter sent by the Nicene (western) bishops at Serdica to the church of Alexandria (37.1–40.3) and to the bishops of Egypt and Libya (41; not included by Opitz in his edition: “this [letter] is identical to the encyclical to the church of Alexandria”), followed by the high-profile encyclical letter of the western bishops gathered at Serdica (42.1–47.6; see above). In a self-referential move, the themes of the Serdican correspondence quoted by Athanasius—its assertion of his innocence, the styling of the Eusebian associates and their brutality towards their opponents, and the flight of the eastern bishops from the Council of Serdica—drew on Athanasius’ own earlier portrayals of his plight at the hands of “the Eusebians”. Sweeping away the bloodstained memories of the events following Serdica, Athanasius inserted a piece of commentary directly after the list of names of those bishops who subscribed to the decisions of Serdica, which stated Constantius II’s immediate and unwavering support for his position (*Apology Against the Arians* 51.1).

Athanasius reproduced the three letters addressed to him from Constantius written between the years 345 and 346. The immediate context for all three letters lay in the period after Serdica, a period characterised by a hardening of imperial attitudes to certain exiled bishops. During their time in the western empire, Athanasius and Paul of Constantinople had gained the support of Constans.⁵¹ The younger of the two Augusti then worked towards their reinstatement in a determined manner over a number of years. In the light of Constans’ initiatives, it appears that Constantius was always on the back foot in his handling of Constans over church affairs. For instance, Constans was instrumental in forcing Constantius’ agreement over a joint council in 342 (convened at Serdica in 343 in Constans’ territory),⁵² and in rebutting the embassy headed by Thalassius sent by Constantius to Constans in Pitybion,⁵³ and, furthermore, he wrote in extraordinarily assertive terms to his brother demanding the return of Paul and Athanasius (see below).

⁵⁰ On Athanasius’ use of Julius’ letter, see the comments by Parvis 2006: 194–195.

⁵¹ See Barnes 1993: 212–217.

⁵² *Defence Before Constantius* 4.12–15.

⁵³ *Defence Before Constantius* 3.19–20. Following the assessment of Barnes 1993: 65–66, 90.

In the face of such opposition, it appears "Constantius yielded".⁵⁴ His response was to send a number of pointed, personal letters to Athanasius (and in all likelihood to Paul also) recalling him from exile. The first letter makes direct reference to Athanasius' circumstances as a deposed cleric. The importance of all three letters in the immediate context prior to Constantius' recall of Athanasius lay in making the bishop a recipient of an act of clemency which constituted a singular honour ("Our gentle clemency will not suffer you"). The first cited letter made use of terms and allusions associated with displacement and exile: the text expresses concern about Athanasius having been "buffeted" (κλυδωνίζεσθαι) and "distressed" (χειμάζεσθαι) "for so long by the sea's savage waves". The emperor also reassures Athanasius: "Our untiring piety has not overlooked you, deprived of your paternal home and stripped of your possession and wandering in pathless places infested with wild beasts".⁵⁵

Since Athanasius spent his time in the western empire during his second exile, largely in and around the cities of the West,⁵⁶ it is hard to imagine where he would have encountered "pathless places infested with savage beasts" (unlike his third exile when he did spend time in the desert⁵⁷). The language of the letter is, therefore, evidently stylised and not intended to convey Constantius' understanding or indeed sympathy for the conditions of Athanasius' exile. Instead, it served to exaggerate the magnanimity of the emperor's clement act. In general, emperors were not inclined to care about the condition of exiles: their business was to threaten exile, reinforce synodal decisions relating to sentences of exile, and in some cases to directly order individuals into banishment.⁵⁸ Athanasius finally returned to Alexandria in autumn 346: Constantius sent a further two letters to the exile, requesting his presence at court, asking him to hasten so that he "can obtain enjoyment of the things which you desire" (51.5).

Although seemingly ignored by Athanasius, the language and stated gesture of the first letter carried considerable significance. Moderns have made pejorative comments about the letter's style: Leslie Barnard for instance remarked on Constantius II's "patronising tone", while Barnes claims to see in the letter "the language of diplomacy which veils, though

⁵⁴ Barnes 1993: 90.

⁵⁵ Trans. Coleman-Norton 1966: 223.

⁵⁶ Barnes 1993: 47–62.

⁵⁷ See Barnes 1993: 119.

⁵⁸ See Stevenson 2014.

it does not quite conceal, the emperor's insincerity". Both judgements are based on the reasonable assumption that Constantius' position had weakened in light of the increased rivalry between Constantius and Constans in the early 340s, hence the conciliatory tone of Constantius' letter to Athanasius as a favourite of Constans.⁵⁹ This fraternal split is documented in a contentious (and rare) example—arguably the most controversial letter of the period—of intra-imperial correspondence. The letter from Constans to his elder brother dating from the spring months of 345, preserved by the ecclesiastical historians of the following century, requests Constantius restore Athanasius and Paul, deposed bishop of Constantinople, to their sees.

Many scholars have doubted the authenticity of the sentiment and by extension the letter itself.⁶⁰ Yet, as Sara Parvis has noted acerbically in response to R.P.C. Hanson's incredulity that Constans was prepared to take the empire towards a civil war over "the restoration of a few bishops",⁶¹ "it is far easier to believe, on the previous record of the house of Constantine, that Constans was ready to demand the restoration of a few bishops for the sake of plunging the empire into civil war".⁶² Barnes' assessment of the letter's diplomatic angle is, therefore, closer to the mark in terms of understanding the politicised landscape over which Athanasius exchanged letters with the Constantinian emperors. Indeed, given the context of the evidently unsettled relations between the two Augusti during that period, the expression of clemency by Constantius II in the first letter of chapter fifty-one of the *Apology Against the Arians* was intended as much for the supporters of Athanasius as for the bishop himself. However, the letter was clearly also double-edged. Constantius' clemency towards Athanasius reminded both the bishop and Constans of Constantius' seniority and jurisdictional oversight of the cases of Paul and Athanasius. Despite his initial lack of response to the letters, Athanasius understood the value of all three letters to his own cause; his recollection of Constantius "writing in a friendly way on three occasions" in his *History of the Arians* (21.1), which offered a deeply tendentious narrative of his relations with Constantius II, continued to play an important role in the presentation of his past actions.

⁵⁹ Barnes 1993: 63–70.

⁶⁰ See Barnes 1993: 265 n. 13.

⁶¹ Hanson 1988: 307.

⁶² Parvis 2006: 200.

Moving from the *Apology Against the Arians* to the *Defence Before Constantius* (*Apologia ad Constantium*), we witness an important development in Athanasius' handling of imperial letters.⁶³ Like the *Apology*, Athanasius' *Defence* was written originally for one purpose (to exonerate the bishop of charges brought by his "Arian" opponents) at an earlier date (May 353), and was redacted at a later stage in light of events (to incorporate an apology to the emperor for his actions prior to his flight into exile in 356).⁶⁴ Like the *Apology*, the *Defence* also drew on imperial letters in order to establish its case. In its final form the work dates from the first half of 357,⁶⁵ its later chapters conveying implied criticism of Constantius' actions towards Athanasius in a manner which presaged the flowering of his invective against the emperor in his *History of the Arians*.

The *Defence* preserves three letters from Constantius concerning Athanasius. The first letter was cited by the bishop as part of his defence against the charge brought by his opponents that he had disobeyed a direct order from Constantius, the details of which are discussed below. Its original context, however, lay in the tumultuous events of early 350 when Constantius became sole Augustus following the murder of Constans by Magnentius' "assassination squad" at Helena, modern-day Elne close to Perpignan.⁶⁶ Following Athanasius' condemnation at the Council of Antioch in 349, Constantius II sent the Praetorian Prefect Philippus⁶⁷ to Alexandria with orders to enforce the council's ruling and install George in place of Athanasius. However, Constans' demise precipitated a strategic U-turn by Constantius towards Athanasius in the expectation that Magnentius and his court would attempt to capitalise on the divisions between the eastern emperor and the support for Athanasius in the West (as Constans himself had done previously).⁶⁸ In the context of Athanasius' efforts to extricate himself from a treasonable charge that he had colluded with Magnentius, the *Defence* (9.5–20, 10.16–26) preserves an albeit jaundiced account of Athanasius' interaction with an embassy sent from Magnentius to Alexandria in 350 following Magnentius' subjugation of Africa. After Athanasius' call for those present to pray for the safety of

⁶³ Utilising the edition by Szymusiak 1987.

⁶⁴ See Gwynn 2007: 37–39, for a summary of the main arguments regarding the dating of the *Defence*.

⁶⁵ Barnes 1993: 196–197; and more recently Barnes 2007.

⁶⁶ Harries 2012: 195.

⁶⁷ *PLRE* 1: 696–697 (Flavius Philippus 7).

⁶⁸ For background, see De Clercq 1954: 418–420.

Constantius, all those assembled replied in one voice, “Come to the assistance of Constantius” (*Defence* 10.25).⁶⁹

A letter⁷⁰ from Constantius conveyed by the *comes* Asterius⁷¹ and the notary Palladius⁷² reached Alexandria prior to the arrival of Magnentius’ party. Its show of support (ultimately short-lived) for Athanasius thereby countermanded the original orders conveyed by Philippus. The letter’s valedictory statement, “May the Divinity guard you, dearest father, for many years”, was added by another hand. While the letter assured Athanasius of Constantius’ support against the machinations of Magnentius and his supporters, the authoritative, “imperial” tone of the missive is hard to miss. Athanasius is urged (προτρέπων) to teach the laity “the obligated religion” (τὴν κεχρεωσθημένην θρησκείαν), as befits the office of bishop. Constantius did not enter into a discussion about the theological character of this tradition and it should be imagined that Athanasius was left in no doubt that the religion to which the people were indebted was the Christianity patronised by the emperor himself! Constantius’ request could thus be read as a kind of general corrective for Athanasius’ sake. He instructs Athanasius to devote his time (σκολλάσειας) to prayers “according to custom”. Constantius was evidently reminding Athanasius of his duties as a bishop which could also be taken as indirect criticism of his politicising tendencies. The version of the letter preserved in the *History of the Arians* would seem to make this point even more forcefully, where Athanasius is warned not to engage in “idle murmur” (ματαιαίσις θρόλοις). As noted, however, its broader significance lies in Constantius’ claim of jurisdiction over the case of Athanasius during the early months of Magnentius’ consolidation of power in Constans’ former territories. In this regard, Constantius’ concern about Athanasius’ affiliation is reflected in the fact—disclosed by Athanasius himself—that Constantius wrote to him on three occasions in the period following the death of Constans.

To return to the matter of Athanasius’ epistolarity, the letter cited in the *Defence Before Constantius* was utilised to exonerate Athanasius’ handling of imperial letters. Athanasius’ concern with the letter from 350 in the *Defence* arose from the charge—the final one in a series of four brought by Athanasius’ eastern opponents—that he had ignored an imperial

⁶⁹ On this episode, see Barnes 1993: 102–103.

⁷⁰ *Defence Before Constantius* 23.1–18; and *History of the Arians* 24.1–4.

⁷¹ *PLRE* 1: 119 (Asterius 3).

⁷² *PLRE* 1: 658–659 (Palladius 4).

command to attend court in Milan conveyed in a letter from the emperor which had been carried by a palatine official named Montanus.⁷³ The date was May 353 and soon after the despatch of the first version of the *Defence Before Constantius* to the emperor in the hands of the anti-Manichaean crusader Serapion of Thmuis, Montanus had arrived in Alexandria with a letter for the bishop from the emperor. This letter purported to be a reply to a letter written by Athanasius to Constantius, in which Athanasius had indicated his willingness to come to Italy to assist in resolving the tensions in the western church. The problem, however, seems to have been that Athanasius claimed not to have written to Constantius in the first place. Thus, the emperor had extended an invitation to the bishop based on an offer never made in the first place. Mindful of the etiquette governing communication with the imperial centre, Athanasius decided not to attend court and instead wrote a letter to Constantius outlining his reasons for not making the journey. The *Defence* supplied for the emperor's benefit a somewhat tortured explanation in which Athanasius argued that the letter requesting his presence could not be construed as official, since the emperor was responding to a letter not written by Athanasius himself, but to a forgery: Athanasius' aim was to argue that he had not ignored a request made in an imperial letter, since the command was made ultimately to the forger, and not Athanasius!

While elements of sophistry had undoubtedly crept into Athanasius' retelling of events, the episode, nevertheless, illustrates the potential for problems—for example, miscommunication intentional or otherwise—to emerge in epistolary relations between the imperial government and its subjects. The first and second charges brought against Athanasius also related to forged correspondence. The first allegation that Athanasius had conspired with Constans against Constantius (chs. 2–5 of the *Defence*) included an allegation that Athanasius had written privately to the emperor of the West. With reference to letters exchanged with Constans after the Council of Alexandria in 338, Athanasius noted: "I did not write to your brother, except when Eusebius and his fellows had written to accuse me, and I was compelled ... to defend myself; and again when I sent him volumes containing the Holy Scriptures, which he had ordered me to prepare for him" (*Defence* 4.5–8).⁷⁴ The second charge comprised an accusation of similarly treasonable import, according to which Athanasius had allegedly

⁷³ *PLRE* 1: 608.

⁷⁴ See the analysis by Parvis 2006: 201.

corresponded with Magnentius (chs. 6–13). Copies of a letter purportedly by Athanasius to the usurper had been presented to Constantius II. The charge was indeed grave, and Athanasius reveals it gave him many sleepless nights. He sought to convince Constantius that the letter in question was forged by appealing in the first instance to the relative commonness of the practice of forging letters: “even if he [the accuser] can show writing resembling mine, the thing is not yet certain; for there are forgers who have often imitated the hand even of you who are Emperors” (11.9–10). In the tindery political atmosphere of the 350s, fears surrounding the manipulation of letters in the public post were justifiable. The best-known example linking forged letters to an act of usurpation during Constantius’ reign is retold by Ammianus Marcellinus some thirty years or so later. In 355, the exploitation of a packet (*fascis*) of forged letters of treasonable content by a coterie of high-ranking officials (including the Praetorian Prefect Lampadius) coerced Silvanus, Constantius’ *magister peditum* in Gaul, into a failed rebellion against the emperor.⁷⁵ Forged letters were also produced at the Council of Serdica by the opponents of Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Asclepas of Gaza. According to the encyclical of the western side of the Council, they were put together by a certain Theognius with the aim of turning the emperors against all three clerics.⁷⁶ As Athanasius notes in his *Defence*, the fact that he was acquainted with Constans rendered plausible the accusation of his corresponding behind Constantius’ back (while strenuously denying having ever done so!); however, in the case of the charge involving Magnentius, he noted, “I never knew him, nor was I ever acquainted with him. What correspondence could there be between persons so entirely unacquainted with each other? What reason was there to induce me to write to such a man?” (*Defence* 6.22–24).

In light of these issues, propriety seems to be the watchword for characterising Athanasius’ epistolary in his *Defence Before Constantius*. Despite his awkward response to Constantius’ letter of 353, Athanasius adopted the position that he had never acted against an imperial order, or indeed that he had ever acted without one. In his narrative of the attempts made to remove him from Alexandria in mid-355 and early 356, first

⁷⁵ Amm. Marc. 15.5.1–31. For a discussion of Ammianus’ account, see Drinkwater 1994. Cf. Hunt 1999.

⁷⁶ See *Apology Against the Arians* 43.3. See Barnard 1992: 87.

through the efforts of the *notarius* Diogenes⁷⁷ followed by those of the *dux* Syrianus,⁷⁸ Athanasius noted that neither official carried letters from Constantius providing the authority for their actions (although it is clear that the directive came from the emperor himself). It was in reply to these events that Athanasius brought forward the personal letter from Constantius delivered in early 350 by Palladius and Asterius in which he claimed his actions were in line with the emperor's wishes.⁷⁹

The remainder of the *Defence* offers a twist in the emergent epistolarity of the fourth century, which I discuss in more detail in the following section. Whereas previously Athanasius had only presented imperial letters that were favourable to his cause (or at least could be made to appear favourable even when the original intention had been otherwise), by contrast the final chapters of the work cite two hostile letters from Constantius against the bishop. Both letters were sent soon after the emperor had ordered officials to remove him from Alexandria, and both served to offer Constantius' judgement on Athanasius by way of criminalising his actions. In the period of civil unrest following the flight of Athanasius from the city and the installation of George as bishop in February 357, Constantius had written letters to the Alexandrians, and to the ruler of Axum, warning them against associating with him. As Athanasius indicated prior to citing the letters in his *Defence*, his opponents referred regularly to one letter—to the Negus of Axum, Aezanas—and threatened death in turn to their opponents, namely, the supporters of Athanasius (*Defence* 29.22–23): a chilling indication of the authority accruing to those in possession of letters from the emperor.

THE JUDGEMENT OF CONSTANTIUS II

It is a striking feature of the *Defence* that Athanasius reveals his anxiety not about being the subject of vitriolic letters from the emperor, but rather about the licence which such letters from Constantius gave to his opponents in their efforts to remove him from his see, or worse to facilitate his death. The final chapters of the *Defence* clearly present a hostile face towards Constantius in the light of events following Athanasius' flight from Alexandria which involved the violent treatment of clergy and laity in

⁷⁷ *PLRE* 1: 255 (Diogenes 2).

⁷⁸ *PLRE* 1: 872.

⁷⁹ *Defence Before Constantius* 24.9–13.

Alexandria, Libya, and wider Egypt (*Defence* 27.20–40) instigated and overseen by Constantius’ own retinue.⁸⁰ However, Athanasius continued to handle himself in a politically mindful manner in the work. Thus, the blame for Athanasius’ predicament is presented in the *Defence* as laying with his calumniators rather than Constantius. In a diplomatic sleight of hand, Athanasius included inimical letters from the emperor—the letter to the Alexandrians and the letter to Aezanas—in the work’s narrative in order to highlight the level of hostility towards him as justification for his flight from Alexandria in 356, while at the same time absolving Constantius of responsibility for the rising tensions in the city which he transferred instead to his opponents and state officials zealous for his demise.⁸¹

Thus, according to the *Defence*, while Constantius’ concern was merely to put Athanasius on his guard, the bishop’s concern was the misuse of this honourable intent in the emperor’s letters against his person by his enemies. Elsewhere in the work, Athanasius noted the “great boldness” given to those with the authority to enforce written orders of the emperor (*Defence* 26.1–5). Athanasius’ interpretation of the letters to the Alexandrians and the rulers of Axum was not simply pragmatic; rather, it acknowledged a fundamental component of the imperial persona as conveyed in letters by Constantius—namely, that of the just judge who will, when required, coerce in order to care for the souls of his subjects.

Constantius’ letters to Alexandria and Axum formed part of a much larger collection of judgemental letters which the emperor wrote against individual bishops during his reign. In this regard, Constantius II followed Constantine in writing open attacks against individuals who had come to be regarded as religious dissidents, notably in his letters and edicts against Arius and his supporters, and others associated with the fallout from the Council of Nicaea. Constantine’s letter to the catholic church of Nicomedia (dated by Opitz to November–December 325) written in the aftermath of the great Council is by far the best example of this type, and served arguably as a template for future imperial letters against bishops during the reign of the Constantinian emperors. Its main concerns were to justify the exile of Eusebius, the bishop of the city, and to inhibit demonstrations of support for Eusebius among the laity. The letter to the Nicomedian Christians was preserved by Athanasius as one in a dossier of letters in his

⁸⁰ Cf. the treatment of the same period in the hostile *History of the Arians* 54–64. See Haas 1997: 280–295.

⁸¹ *Defence Before Constantius* 32.13–16.

*On the Decisions of the Nicene Council (De decretis Nicaenae synodi)*⁸² for the purpose of highlighting the unhappy fates of those clergy who rejected the Nicene settlement.⁸³ The letter illustrates some core concerns of the imperial centre with the Church at this point in time, which we see repeated in Constantius II’s oppugnant correspondence with bishops. In order to draw out these concerns, I present a brief analysis of the letter in the following paragraphs.

Constantine’s letter accompanied Eusebius into exile in the three months after Nicaea: the sentence of exile falling on both Eusebius and Theognius, bishop of Nicaea, as a result of their harbouring of exiled Alexandrian prelates.⁸⁴ Behind Constantine’s charge lay resentment about Eusebius’ sympathy for Arius which had influenced his refusal to sign the anathemas appended to the creed of Nicaea. Addressed to the Christian community of Nicomedia, the underlying purpose of the emperor’s letter was to accentuate a series of charges against Eusebius in order to defame his reputation—in effect by criminalising Eusebius’ actions—among the Nicomedians; it is important to recognise that the charges brought against him in the letter are not given as grounds for his exile, in which case it follows that they were supplied in order to harm his standing. Indeed, Constantine intimates to the addressees that they themselves have become implicated in the theological errors of their bishop, based on Eusebius’ seeming denial of the Son’s eternal procession from the Father, ideas which were ultimately of “Arian” derivation. Addressing the Nicomedians, Constantine states: “You proclaim yourselves to be confessors of him [the Son], whom you deny exists, when the abandoned teacher [Eusebius] persuades you of this” (27.9). The letter promoted a high-level charge against Eusebius, alleging a prior and treasonable association with Constantine’s former co-Augustus turned rival, Licinius, whose execution in spring 325 predated the letter,⁸⁵ alongside the charge of propagating errant teaching to his church in Nicomedia. The allegation relating to

⁸² See Gwynn 2007: 29–33, for discussion of the date and context of this work.

⁸³ For the Greek text, see Opitz 1935. Versions of the letter are preserved in a number of sources including Athanasius, *On the Decisions of the Nicene Council* 41.1–47, and Gelasius, *Hist. eccl.* 3, Suppl. I. For a translation with notes, see Coleman-Norton 1966: 135–141, which I follow here. See also Barnes 1993: 242–243, for an alternative translation. Also Maraval 2010: 58–62, with a useful set of notes at 191–193.

⁸⁴ See Parvis 2006: 103–104, for details of the reinstatements of Eusebius and Theognis in 328.

⁸⁵ For the issues surrounding the condemnation of Licinius, see Corcoran 2010.

Eusebius' actions arising from his relationship to Licinius is presented as a crime against the emperor, the substance of the charge mirroring the one made against Licinius, namely, that both were guilty of despatching spies and recruiting troops to fight against Constantine. In this way, the ideas and language used to construct the notion of the secular *tyrannus* were borrowed to create the idea of the tyrannical (heretic) bishop.⁸⁶

The letter opens with a theological lesson stressing the generation of the Son from the Father.⁸⁷ It then weaves together Constantine's portrayal of Eusebius' theological position with his reputation as the "court bishop" of Licinius in Nicomedia.⁸⁸ The theme throughout is very much "guilt by association": Eusebius' association with Licinius and the Nicomedian Christians' association with Eusebius. Thus, Eusebius taught the church "with tyrannical cruelty", since "he has been a client of the tyrant [Licinius]" (27.9). Eusebius is branded a "co-initiate" (συνμύστης) in tyranny. The letter implicates Eusebius in Licinius' persecution of Christians,⁸⁹ including the murder of "true bishops", and goes so far as to allege the bishop's involvement in recruiting troops for Licinius in preparation for his struggle with Constantine (27.10), a couched reference to the civil war of 324. At the heart of the matter lay the issue of imperial legitimacy and the support offered to the emperor and the state by the Church in maintaining this legitimacy. According to the letter, Eusebius' involvement in the imperial-political tensions of the time had distorted (διαστροφή, 27.12) his leadership, which had in turn implicated his congregation in his "crime". This sentiment marked an important stage in the way that imperial power spoke to episcopal authority. Bishops who supported individuals or parties inimical to the emperor were accused of seeking glory beyond the duties of their episcopal office. This became a central allegation in the letters of Constantine II, whereby the charge formed a *topos* in imperial letters directed towards bishops who had fallen from the emperor's favour.

Next Constantine turned to the addressees themselves: "through Eusebius' guidance and perversion you have seized upon a knowledge

⁸⁶See Malosse and Schouler 2009: 165–166, on the typology of the tyrant in Late Antiquity.

⁸⁷Cf. Hanson 1988: 173: "The letter begins with a series of theological commonplaces couched in language so cloudy and vague that it must have given the people of Nicomedia considerable trouble to understand it."

⁸⁸For Eusebius of Nicomedia's contacts with Licinius, see Gwynn 2010: 290–291. On Licinius' death, see Barnes 1981: 214.

⁸⁹For details, see Barnes 2011: 105–106.

divorced from truth. But a cure (θεραπεία) is not slow, if indeed, after you now at all events have received a bishop both faithful and sincere [Amphion,⁹⁰ Eusebius’ successor], you look to God” (27.12). The influence of Eusebius on his church is thereby likened to a contagion: the cure is the attention of a faithful bishop. Further charges are raised about Eusebius’ conduct at Nicaea during the Council, and subsequently with bishop Theognius in relation to their affairs with condemned prelates. The letter closes with the threat of (an unspecified) legal sanction to be applied against those who persist in their ties with both men, specifically those who maintain the remembrance of Eusebius and Theognius (styled “corrupters”: λυμεῶνες) by speaking well of them in public: “But if anyone shall dare to cling imprudently to those corrupters in respect to mention or to praise, forthwith he shall be repressed from his own audacity by the activity of God’s servants, that is, myself” (27.17).

Modern commentators have claimed to see in Constantine’s letter an emotive tone, specifically in its violent⁹¹ and bitter⁹² language towards Eusebius. However, such assessments misjudge the importance of emphases of this kind within the context of the broader rhetorical and legal concerns of the imperial centre. Imperial letters were after all texts with communicative purpose that incorporated legal, retributive, moral, and rhetorical concerns and themes, their “intensive language” thereby revealing a “method in [their] stylistic choice”.⁹³ The core concerns of the letter therefore involved undermining Eusebius’ support among the Christians of Nicomedia and producing, in a ripple-like effect, an enervation of his support beyond the city and across the eastern half of the empire. The letter’s strategy in this case can be seen in its alignment of Eusebius with the toxic figure of Licinius, and the language used to describe Eusebius’ teachings as a contagion in need of a cure. Any vehemence detectable in Constantine’s prose most likely reflected the historic proximity of Eusebius to members of the extended imperial family.⁹⁴

Imperial letters addressing religious crimes issued during the reigns of Constantine and his sons proved instrumental in defining attitudes to religious dissent in the period and beyond. Such letters presented a codified

⁹⁰ See Prinzivalli 1992.

⁹¹ Hanson 1988: 173.

⁹² Gwynn 2010: 290.

⁹³ Hillner 2015: 93, 94–96, for observations on imperial legal texts more broadly.

⁹⁴ Vanderspoel 1999: 410–411.

response to religious dissidents and utilised a range of rhetorical markers—dissidents as criminals and traitors, dissent as heresy, and heresy as a social contagion—in order to frame judgements about the criminality of dissenters as the basis for further legal recourse. As recent work on clerical exile in Late Antiquity has shown, terms referring to the contagiousness of individuals or groups were utilised in legal texts presaging or arising from instances of clerical exile: banishment in rhetorical terms was commonly expressed as the removal of an infected body in order to forestall the spread of disease to the wider populace, exile in this sense constituting an act of social hygiene.⁹⁵ Beneath the meta-language of disease, the emperor and the imperial authorities regarded exile as a way of removing corrosive figures from communities, and breaking up networks of dissenting influences within them. Constantius II's focus too lay, like his father's, with individual dissenters. His reign was characterised by the exile of numerous clerics especially during the volatile 350s.⁹⁶ Among the bishops who experienced the sharp edge of his stylus were Athanasius of Alexandria and Liberius, bishop of Rome. In both cases, Constantius wrote *ad populum* about the conduct of their bishop; in both instances Constantius was writing public attacks against hugely popular and influential figures in their cities. A letter of Constantius against Liberius addressed to the people of Rome in the year prior to his exile in 355 attacked the bishop directly over his support for Athanasius. The letter itself does not survive, although Liberius in a later reply to the emperor disclosed its hostile sentiments. In writing to the Christian community in Rome about the judgement of their bishop, Constantius was engaged in a high-risk strategy by taking on the reputation of a bishop in whom the city had invested considerable civic pride over the years,⁹⁷ as indeed was the case in his letters against Athanasius to the Alexandrians and his supporters further afield in 357.

Therefore, while not “personal letters” as such, these missives of Constantius made intensely personal (*ad hominem*-style) attacks on their targets; indeed, the intensity appears greater in those cases where the emperor was acquainted with the bishop in question. We should not lose sight of the fact that the primary role of such letters was to convey the

⁹⁵ See Washburn 2013: 53–64; Hillner 2015: 89–116.

⁹⁶ For details, see Hillner 2015: 358–361.

⁹⁷ For Liberius as the object of the Roman populace's affections, see Amm. Marc. 15.7.10. For his support among the elites of the city, see Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 2.14. For commentary, see Barnes 1992; Curran 2000: 129–137.

emperor’s legal voice. John Noël Dillon’s recent study of Constantine’s legislative persona has illustrated the personal tenor of much of Constantine’s legislation—which Dillon refers to as the “vehemence” of the emperor’s interest in pronouncing justice—especially in matters relating to administration and religion.⁹⁸ A similar tenor may also be witnessed in the legislative concerns of Constantius, a tone which has contributed to the negative historiography surrounding Constantius as is apparent in Richard Hanson’s dismissive characterisation of the emperor’s letter which condemned Aetius and Eudoxius of Antioch in 358 as an example of the “usual imperial bluster” (about which, see below).⁹⁹ However, assessments of this kind as noted above misread the legal and rhetorical importance of such language in terms of conveying ideas about religious dissidents which presaged the definitional role of laws against practitioners of “heresy” introduced later in the century by the Valentinian and Theodosian emperors.¹⁰⁰

In the case of Liberius, the evidence for epistolary relations with Constantius is limited in the main to only one letter—the so-called *Obsecro* epistle¹⁰¹—but it is a letter replete with detail about the role of imperial correspondence in the period following the Council of Sirmium in 351.¹⁰² In a letter dated to 353–354, Liberius noted that Constantius had written a letter to the people of Rome “a little while ago” (*dudum*) that was severely critical of their bishop. The *Obsecro* letter represented Liberius’ reply to the emperor. The exchange was precipitated by Liberius’ defence of Athanasius in opposition to Constantius’ efforts to remove him. Liberius’ reply is preserved in a work dating from the time of his eventual capitulation to imperial pressure in late 357–358, which is ascribed to Hilary, bishop of Poitiers (himself exiled in 356¹⁰³) known as the *Historica Fragmenta* (also called the *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina* following the

⁹⁸ Dillon 2012: 97–107.

⁹⁹ Hanson 1988: 357.

¹⁰⁰ On the rhetorical character of late Roman legislation, see Humfress 2007: 217–242.

¹⁰¹ Trans. Wickham 1997: 71–75.

¹⁰² In a letter written during his exile (beginning in 355) to the presbyters and bishops of the eastern church (*Pro deifico*; *CSEL* 65.168.5–170.1) in which Liberius announced he no longer defended Athanasius and also that he accepted the creed of Sirmium; Liberius also notes that he has written to Constantius about the condemnation of Athanasius, no doubt showing his support for his denunciation (at 168.13–16).

¹⁰³ See Williams 1991 on the circumstances surrounding Hilary’s exile, and the dating of parts of the *Collectanea*.

title assigned to the work by its editor Alfred Feder in 1916).¹⁰⁴ The work comprises a collection of conciliar, episcopal, and imperial letters fused together by a vituperative narrative against exponents of “Arianism” (namely, the flip-flopping Illyrican bishops Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa) and their “sympathisers” (e.g. Liberius). This formed part of a larger work by Hilary mentioned by Jerome (*On Illustrious Men* 100) entitled *The Book Against Valens and Ursacius, Containing a History of the Synods of Ariminum and Seleucia*. Like Athanasius’ *Apology Against the Arians*, Hilary’s work is a narrative compendium of epistolary texts, utilising letters from as early as the Council of Serdica in 343, which Hilary added further letters to in stages in order to meet his circumstances. Hilary’s work represents, therefore, a further important example of Nicene epistolarity, especially in its use of letters to develop specific arguments relating to the integrity of an individual or to create an identity for a faction. The dossier of Liberius’ letters was presented in Hilary’s historicising text in order to document the fall of a “hero” of the Nicene-Athanasian cause,¹⁰⁵ from the period of Liberius’ vigorous defence of Athanasius leading to his exile in Thrace, followed by his subsequent condemnation of Athanasius and his efforts to secure his return to Rome.¹⁰⁶

Prior to his exile in 355, Liberius was instrumental in resisting the efforts of both imperial and episcopal parties in securing western assent to the condemnation of Athanasius after the Council of Sirmium in 351.¹⁰⁷ A clear indication of Liberius’ stance on Athanasius is provided by his *Obsecro* letter to Constantius sent to the emperor following the severe blow suffered by Liberius at the Council of Arles in 353, where his Italian legates (including Vincentius of Capua) had capitulated to the eastern bishops’ condemnation of Athanasius.¹⁰⁸ In the *Obsecro* letter, Liberius adopted a deferential yet firm epistolary persona in support of the Alexandrian prelate and instructed the emperor about the grounds for convening an additional council to discuss the matter: “[t]his is just such a letter as one

¹⁰⁴ On the history of the work, see Smulders 1995: 1–28; also useful is Hanson 1988: 469–470.

¹⁰⁵ Smulders 1995: 23.

¹⁰⁶ On the exile of Liberius, and the role of his letters in the *Collectanea*, see Brennecke 1984: 265–301. See also the comments by Barnes 1992: 264, in relation to arguments against the authenticity of the letters of Liberius in the *Collectanea*.

¹⁰⁷ On Liberius, see De Clercq 1954: 422–445; Hanson 1988: 334–341; also Barnes 1992 for a discussion of Liberius’ recall from exile.

¹⁰⁸ See Williams 1995: 53.

would expect from the successor of Julius".¹⁰⁹ In terms of the disagreement over the deposition of Athanasius between the two figures, Liberius' letter contains the following remarkable statement from the bishop: "therein I understand myself to be in a difficulty, because I cannot, by repeated amends bring your mind to reconcile itself with me, a mind forgiving even towards the guilty". It is thus in agreement with the famous sentiment in Ossius of Cordova's letter to Constantius from around the time of Liberius' exile ("Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands to us about them; but learn them from us").¹¹⁰

The focus of Liberius' letter suggests that the bishop had been the subject of what in essence was an epistolary diatribe from the emperor addressed to the Church of Rome against their leader. By extracting the substance of Liberius' defence in the letter, it is possible to identify some of the hostile rhetoric directed at Liberius by Constantius in his letter. A central concern for Liberius was the need to defend the sincerity of his occupation of the Roman see against what had likely been a slur of worldly opportunism against him by the emperor in light of his handling of the western bishops' response to Athanasius, based perhaps on Liberius' hand in orchestrating a fight-back after the events in Arles.¹¹¹ Constantius' letter also likely included the (related?) charge that Liberius had hidden letters sent by eastern and Egyptian bishops detailing the alleged crimes of Athanasius from the Italian delegates who had gathered at the synod of Rome in 352,¹¹² a charge which Liberius raised and rebutted in the *Obsecro* letter. In addition, the final statement of his defence suggests that Constantius had accused Liberius of attempting to extend the influence of Rome across the West over the matter of Athanasius. Here we see a restating of the familiar charge that worldly ambition distorts episcopal leadership, as expressed by Constantine in his letter to the church of Nicomedia against their bishop Eusebius. The characterisation appears, therefore, to have been an influence on how Constantius responded to his episcopal opponents. Nonetheless, in reply to the allegation of opportunism, Liberius responded in a robust fashion.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Hanson 1988: 339.

¹¹⁰ For a discussion and translation of Ossius' letter to Constantius, see De Clercq 1954: 450–451.

¹¹¹ Cf. De Clercq 1954: 429–430.

¹¹² See Barnes 1993: 110.

¹¹³ Set forth in *CSEL* 65.90.26–91.14.

Liberius' fate in the wake of this letter was an unhappy one. In 355, Constantius summoned bishops to Milan to seek their approval for the settlement of the Sirmium Council of 351.¹¹⁴ A number of western bishops refused to condemn the episcopal opponents of Constantius and the eastern bishops and as a result were exiled and replaced by bishops sympathetic to the theological views *en vogue* among the imperial centre. Liberius, who was not present at the Council, was nevertheless sent into exile soon afterwards, and replaced by a certain Felix, with Athanasius offering a wonderfully cynical portrait of his ordination and consecration in his *History of the Arians* (75). The exiling of one bishop and his replacement by another during this period was a strategy on the part of Constantius and the eastern bishops to create networks of consensus on the issues of theology and personnel in key sees across the empire. Recent research by Steffen Diefenbach has argued that Constantius' principal concern with the Christian church in the 350s lay in this type of initiative rather than with devising a universal creed, which arose only towards the end of the decade and in response to the involvement of Basil, bishop of Anycra (for more on this, see below).¹¹⁵

Imperial letters were thus instrumental in laying the ground for shaping lay attitudes to bishops who were targets for exile (as in the case of Constantius on Liberius' fitness for office), or in justifying actions which had led to the exile of bishops (such as the letters against Athanasius presented below). In relation to both types, the threat of legal sanction against supporters of the bishop was also communicated as an ongoing concern. This latter point is best illustrated by Constantius' letter to the Alexandrians about Athanasius, their deposed bishop, from 357, preserved by Athanasius in his *Defence Before Constantius*. The letter dates from the time when state-endorsed violence precipitated intercommunal tensions in Alexandria just prior to and during the tenure of George as the city's new bishop, the details of which Athanasius memorialised in his writings (including in his *Defence of His Flight*, and his *History of the Arians*).¹¹⁶ The emperor's letter represented, therefore, a further stage in the efforts to dissolve the remaining support for the deposed bishop in the city. It lent not simply rhetorical force to the emperor's opposition to Athanasius, but also supplied a legal licence to Constantius' ecclesiastical and civic agents to act

¹¹⁴ Barnes 1993: 109–110.

¹¹⁵ Diefenbach 2015.

¹¹⁶ Haas 1997: 280–295.

against the supporters of the bishop. The letter exaggerated points of contrast between the city itself, portrayed as a virtuous centre of learning, and Athanasius as a low-born and nefarious demagogue. Thus, Alexandria is portrayed as a noble city with an impeccable pedigree of nurturing "the first teachers of wisdom who were the first to acknowledge God", against the villainous character and corrupting discourse of Athanasius. Portrayed as having emerged from the "lowest pits", Athanasius is described as having come from "the multitude" to bring ruin to the souls of the Alexandrians with unprofitable ideas (lit. "hair-splitting"), and to undermine the values of the Roman state. One section of the letter likens Athanasius' relations with the Alexandrians to that of a demagogue's appeal to a crowd.¹¹⁷

The letter illustrates that Constantius II was closely following the rhetorical persona adopted by his father as a monarch concerned with maintaining the well-being of his subjects' souls (cf. *Defence* 30.21–22), a corollary of the Constantinian preoccupation with demonstrating personal involvement in matters of justice and administration.¹¹⁸ Constantius held that Athanasius had only ever offered the Alexandrians "unfruitful discourse" (*Defence* 30.21–22) which in a neat irony mirrored the accusation made by Constantine against Arius, Athanasius' arch theological opponent, and Alexander, Athanasius' predecessor as Alexandrian bishop, in his letter from 324 over their competing ideas concerning Christ's nature, which is preserved in Eusebius' *Life* of the emperor.¹¹⁹

Compared to Constantine's even-handed apportioning of blame for the emergence of such disputes, Constantius' charge against Athanasius aimed to discredit him as an individual in the eyes of the populace. The letter's jaundiced portrait of the bishop set the dishonest Athanasius against the Alexandrians as a virtuous body of citizens with a venerable civic history who had rejected Athanasius and chosen instead "the revered George" under whose guidance "you will continue to have a good hope respecting the future life, and will pass your time in this present world, in rest and quietness" (*Defence* 30.50–52). George was the imperially endorsed candidate, and the claim of open acceptance presented by the letter was therefore entirely fictional. Nevertheless, the legal purport of the letter was conveyed in the warning to Athanasius' supporters: either

¹¹⁷ *Defence Before Constantius* 30.18–35.

¹¹⁸ See Dillon 2012: 97–118.

¹¹⁹ *Vit Const.* 2.69.2–3.

distance yourselves from a bishop who “did not wait for judgement to proceed against him, but sentenced himself to banishment, as he deserved” (in reference to Athanasius’ flight in early 356) or face the death penalty. Recalcitrant supporters of Athanasius were to be summarily handled.¹²⁰

Athanasius’ account of George’s coordinated acts of brutality with the *dux aegypti* Sebastian (“the Manichaeon”: *PLRE* I: 812 [Sebastianus 2]) in May 357 in the *Defence of His Flight* (chs. 4–6) offers clear evidence of the intensified response of the Alexandrian authorities to supporters of Athanasius: such responses were undoubtedly sanctioned by letters like the one sent to the Alexandrians. Constantius’ letter to the Alexandrians may also contain the seeds of the other letter preserved by Athanasius in the *Defence*, namely, the remarkable letter to the monarch Aezanas of Axum, and his sibling Sazanas, most likely sent soon after the letter to the people of Alexandria. In his letter to the Alexandrians, Constantius had noted that “it is for the interest of the barbarians to remove [Athanasius] out of the way, lest he lead some of them into impiety, for he will make his complaint, like distressed characters in a play, to those who first fall in with him”.¹²¹ Athanasius’ movements after his flight from Alexandria in February 356 are the subject of speculation,¹²² and in light of Constantius’ recommendation above it is conceivable that he found refuge for a time in the kingdom of Axum which lay outside the Roman empire, but which, nevertheless, maintained close trading and political ties to Rome.¹²³ Wherever Athanasius ended up, the letter to Aezanas reveals the close relationship between Athanasius and Frumentius, the first attested Christian bishop in Axum. Frumentius appears to have come under Athanasius’ tutelage at an early stage of his life.¹²⁴ Athanasius’ involvement with Frumentius and the christianisation of Axum is situated during the bishop’s “Golden Decade” (346–356) as one of the highlights of the period.¹²⁵ By the time of Constantius’ letter (c. 357), Aezanas had already converted to Christianity, as is evident from the royal inscriptions of an irredentist nature in both Ethiopic (Ge‘ez) and Greek dating from his

¹²⁰ *Defence Before Constantius* 30.62–65.

¹²¹ *Defence Before Constantius* 30.32–34.

¹²² Cf. Barnes 1993: 119.

¹²³ For a summary treatment of Axum in Late Antiquity, see Fowden 1993: 109–116; and more recently Bowersock 2013: 44–77.

¹²⁴ A romantic account of Frumentius’ life is given by Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 10.9–10. See the discussions in Frend 1989, and Black 2008: 96–97.

¹²⁵ Haas 1997: 280.

reign, but also from the closing words of Constantius’ “Christian” subscription (“May God guard you, most honoured brethren”), and the implicit appeal repeated in the letter to the Negus’ duty of care towards Christians in his kingdom.¹²⁶ In this respect, Constantius’ letter to Aezanas is a rare example of state correspondence between two Christian monarchs in which the subject of religious rectitude takes centre stage. The letter’s explicit wish to safeguard the citizens of Axum from the corrupting influence of “impious statements” deriving from Athanasius conveys a similar impression of Constantius’ imperial persona to the one projected in his letter to the Alexandrians against Athanasius; namely, Constantius regarded his principal role as ensuring the spiritual well-being of all persons within his purview. However, in pragmatic terms this persona also permitted Constantius to assert his (= Roman) jurisdiction over episcopal appointments in Axum. Indeed, the letter begins with a clear statement of Constantius’ ecumenicism (*Defence* 31.5–13).

Constantius’ forthright expression linking his own sense of imperial responsibility for religious mission with a desire to see a uniform doctrine taught across the “common humanity” presents him as the direct heir to his father’s ecumenical legacy.¹²⁷ Athanasius’ pernicious influence on Frumentius, his influence in passing on to the bishop of Axum harmful teachings which blaspheme against God, and stir up animosity in the Church, is the central concern of the letter. The request from Constantius is forceful and clear: Frumentius is required to present himself to George of Alexandria in order to undergo an investigation into his appointment.¹²⁸ Once again the language of moral degradation is paramount: via Athanasius, Constantius fears that Frumentius is at liberty to corrupt (διαφθείρη) the Axumites by presenting to them “accursed and impious teachings”, but also by extending the chaos caused by Athanasius to all nations. Athanasius, branded a felon (“guilty of a myriad crimes”), is thereby portrayed as a direct threat to the long-nurtured ambitions for a Christian universalism first proposed by Constantine. Athanasius is transformed by Constantius into an antitype of the Constantinian ideal, and in this sense is portrayed as behaving very much like an imperial usurper: the bishop as the bringer of disunity to the *oikoumene*.

¹²⁶ On the inscriptions of Aezanas, see now Bowersock 2013: 72–74.

¹²⁷ For the details see Fowden 1993: 85–99.

¹²⁸ See Black 2008 for the argument that the Greek inscription discovered in 1970 bears signs of an “anti-Arian” theology, thereby cementing the influence of Athanasius on Frumentius, and Frumentius on Aezanas.

CONCLUSION

The vehemence of Constantius II's pronouncements against corrosive influences in his realm is very well illustrated by a "remarkable letter"¹²⁹ from 358 composed by the emperor and addressed to the church at Antioch, which is preserved by Sozomen in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Sozomen's inclusion of the imperial letter forms part of his narrative outlining the rise to prominence in Antioch of Aetius, the former favourite of Constantius' cousin Gallus,¹³⁰ and a leading exponent of "Anhomoean" theology, whereby God the Father and the Son were deemed to be dissimilar to one another, as a feature of the non-Nicene ("Arian") theological revival of the 350s.¹³¹ At a time when a number of non-Nicene bishops were promoting a "manifesto"¹³² outlining the rejection of "substance-language"¹³³ in the guise of the so-called "Blasphemy of Sirmium"¹³⁴—arising from a compact meeting in the Pannonian city in 357 headed by Valens, Ursacius, and Germinius of Sirmium—the influence of Aetius in Antioch and his dissimilarity theology caused alarm among those bishops who wished to maintain the relationship between God the Father and the Son in terms of likeness of substance (the so-called "Homoiousians").¹³⁵ Aetius' patron at this stage was Eudoxius, the bishop of Antioch.¹³⁶ While Eudoxius had supported the settlement of Sirmium,¹³⁷ his support for Aetius—seemingly not incompatible with his support for Sirmium—along with his conduct in gaining the Antiochene see had raised the hackles of George of Laodicea and a cohort of Syrian bishops. George addressed a letter to Macedonius of Constantinople, Basil of Ancyra, and others in which he warned of the "shipwreck" affecting Antioch caused by the prominence of Aetius and his disciples in clerical positions in the city. In response, Basil convened a council in Ancyra just prior to Easter of 358 which produced a detailed position statement written by those who subscribed to the homoiousian position (apud Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.2.1–11.11).¹³⁸

¹²⁹ Amidon 2007: 68 n. 14.

¹³⁰ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.15.8.

¹³¹ See Vaggione 2000: 161–179.

¹³² Hanson 1988: 347.

¹³³ Vaggione 2000: 208–209.

¹³⁴ The phrase derives from Hilary of Poitiers; see Barnes 1993: 141.

¹³⁵ See Vaggione 2000: 161–163.

¹³⁶ For background, see Kopecek 1979: 150–155.

¹³⁷ Hanson 1988: 348.

¹³⁸ On which see Hanson 1988: 350–357; Vaggione 2000: 161–163. And most recently Fairbairn 2013.

According to Sozomen's narrative, the delegation from Ancyra headed by Basil reached the imperial court in Sirmium just as Asphalius, a presbyter from Antioch, was returning with a letter from Constantius in support of Eudoxius. After having received their report, the emperor issued his letter to the church in Antioch. It is apparent from the letter's contents that popular opinion in the city held that Constantius had initially approved, perhaps even sponsored, Eudoxius' and Aetius' ordinations. Both had certainly enjoyed imperial support in the recent past.¹³⁹ The emperor thus began by distancing himself from both Eudoxius ("[he] did not come from us; let none think that he did. We are far from showing favour to such persons") and Aetius ("[Aetius and his followers], subtle and audacious in all affairs, already have made some such insolent boast that we rejoice in their ordination ... But it is not at all so, not even near it"). The persuasive force of Basil's exposition as head of the delegation evidently led to a change of mind on the emperor's part towards both Eudoxius and Aetius, the chief expositors of a formula condemned by Constantius as a heresy.¹⁴⁰ The influence of Basil's homoiousian exposition is also clearly apparent in Constantius' pronouncement ("Now recall, I pray, the first discussions, when we were considering about the faith: and in these our Saviour was shown as the Son of God and in essence similar to the father").¹⁴¹

The remainder of the letter reveals the emperor's anxiety about the influence of Aetius and his supporters on the Antiochene church.¹⁴² Once again, Constantius' concern is expressed in terms of a moral degradation introduced by heretics of low birth and their associative influence in corrupting the masses. Betraying the influence of a famous Homeric dictum ("to bear and to carry": *Iliad* 5.484), their behaviour is likened to acts of plunder committed during times of war.¹⁴³ In the case of Constantius' response to the situation in Antioch, he delegated the responsibility of eradicating the scourge of Aetius to "truth's disciples" and "good men"

¹³⁹ For Aetius' relations with Gallus and Julian, see Hanson 1988: 600–603; Vaggione 2000: 160–161.

¹⁴⁰ On Basil and Constantius, see Brennecke 1988: 9–17. Philostorgius 4.8 attributes Basil's success with Constantius to his influence with the women at the imperial court, meaning no doubt the empress Eusebia and her council.

¹⁴¹ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.4. Trans. Coleman-Norton 1966: 255–257. Constantius' (brief) endorsement of Basil is discussed by Hanson 1988: 357–380.

¹⁴² See the analysis of Kopecek 1979: 173–174 on this portion of the letter.

¹⁴³ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.6. See Coleman-Norton 1966: 257.

whom he asks to uphold the faith of their fathers, in all likelihood a coded message not perhaps aimed directly at Eudoxius but rather at his supporters in the church as an encouragement to move away from Aetius and back towards a settlement more in line with the Ancyran synod of early 358.¹⁴⁴

As with Constantius' letters to the Alexandrians and Frumentius, his letter to the Antiochenes reveals the emperor's involvement in securing settlements relating to both personnel and doctrine that consolidated imperial interests in strategic locations across the empire. Since religion and politics were intertwined in the imperial mind, Constantius' wish to resolve doctrinal differences was often precipitated by the need to maintain peace and security in churches and cities affected by divisions caused by disagreements between the factions in the church. This was not just a matter of maintaining civil order, but was properly associated with Constantius' imperial responsibility to safeguard the well-being of the empire and its citizens by securing the benefactions of God. For Constantius this was to be achieved in part via a theological settlement which brought the "proper knowledge" (in the words of Constantius to Aezanas, cited above) of God the Father and the Son, and the relationship between the two, to the citizens of his realm.¹⁴⁵ Antioch was riven by factional disputes between the years 358 and 360: for reasons of prestige and strategic importance, Constantius was not prepared to tolerate sustained disagreements among the city's Christian population. Concern over the ordinations and subsequent actions of Eudoxius, Aetius, and others in Antioch led directly to the convening of the dual councils of Ariminum in Italy and Seleucia in Isauria in 359, and in turn the Council of Constantinople in early 360, all with the aim of resolving spectral disputes over doctrinal language. As Barnes has indicated, Constantius' direct involvement in convening and overseeing these councils, at which senior imperial officials presided at both Ariminum and Seleucia, "had no precedent".¹⁴⁶ Diefenbach's recent tempered analysis of events in 356–360 has called into question the traditional assessment of Constantius II as a ruler whose religious policy focused solely on securing creedal uniformity in the church—typified by Hanson's analysis of what he regrettably termed "Constantius' Final Solution"¹⁴⁷ with its focus on events leading up to the

¹⁴⁴ Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.6–7.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Fowden 1993: 88.

¹⁴⁶ Barnes 1993: 169.

¹⁴⁷ Hanson 1988: 371.

“Homoean” creed of the Council of Constantinople of 360. By drawing attention to the “extraordinarily effective” role of creeds in “polarizing dissent”,¹⁴⁸ Diefenbach has suggested a reappraisal of Constantius’ policy of intervention especially in matters of ecclesiastical patronage, as evidenced in the letter to the church of Antioch above, but also in his sustained handling of the crises in Alexandria and the status of Athanasius.¹⁴⁹

Diefenbach’s characterisation of the *type* of interventionist Constantius turned out to be appears justifiable in light of the tone of the emperor’s letters discussed above, and their prevailing concern with judging the fitness of certain individuals for specific sees. Evaluating the success of Constantius’ interventionism from the mid-350s onwards is perhaps a different matter altogether. Events towards the end of 359, for example, the detention of a delegation of bishops from Ariminum in Nice in Thrace in order to secure their signatures on the homoean creed, illustrate the severe limitations of an interventionist approach in securing a consensual settlement.¹⁵⁰ The letter of Constantius to bishops convening for the council of Ariminum in Italy in July 359 indicated his thinking on unity in the following manner: “your Sincerities are to recognise the need for a discussion on faith and unity and for attention to be given to the provision of due order in matters ecclesiastical”.¹⁵¹ At root, therefore, Constantius’ letters communicated his obligation to secure divine favour for the empire, his efforts in this regard directed towards securing agreement on matters of faith among the practitioners of Christianity. His letters to the churches of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, in which he openly condemned Liberius, Athanasius, Eudoxius, and others while promoting his own episcopal choices, were the ultimate symbols of state involvement in church matters during his reign. Such letters were the unwelcome counterpart—for their recipients and supporters at least—of the “personal letters” to bishops from Constantine lionised by Eusebius in book ten of his *Ecclesiastical History*. Indeed, the literary replies of Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer of Cagliari, all opponents of Constantius in the later years of his reign, indicate that the real force of imperial letters lay not solely in their legal power to discipline and punish, but rather in their influence in shaping the terms of debate, and setting—intentionally or otherwise—precedents for pejorative responses to displays of imperial authority.

¹⁴⁸ Diefenbach 2015: 371. Also see Diefenbach 2012.

¹⁴⁹ Diefenbach 2015: 363–364.

¹⁵⁰ Hanson 1988: 378–380; Barnes 1993: 169.

¹⁵¹ Trans. Wickham 1997: 81.

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Pagans and Paganism in the Age of the Sons of Constantine

Jan R. Stenger

INTRODUCTION: “PAGANISM” IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

The history of the fourth century, a pivotal period in the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages, is under the shadow of two eminent figures, Constantine “the Great” and his nephew Julian “the Apostate”. The former, as the first Christian emperor, paved the way to a unity of the Roman empire and Christian faith, while the latter, though brought up within the Church, is famous for his failed attempt to restore paganism and roll back the Christian sway over state and society. Both of them have long fascinated scholars and also inspired popular imagination, above all for their contrary religious policies. What seems to emerge from many studies and has taken root in the public perception of their rules is a compelling narrative of the victory of Christianity.¹ After Constantine had adopted the

¹ Cf. Clark 2004: 8–12.

J. R. Stenger (✉)
Institut für Klassische Philologie, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg,
Würzburg, Germany
e-mail: jan.stenger@uni-wuerzburg.de

new faith, Christianity soon rose to dominance in the empire until, at the end of the century, it was strong enough to suppress and ultimately exterminate the traditional religion. The reign of Constantine's sons, Constantine II, Constans and Constantius, sits somewhat awkwardly with this narrative. Since they apparently continued their father's religious agenda, even if with greater zeal, paganism in their time figures merely as an object or victim of imperial oppression, inevitably doomed to vanish.

This idea, however, needs to be revisited as recent research has become increasingly aware that Constans and his brothers were not content with merely executing their father's will but in many areas pursued their own aims. Therefore, this chapter intends to reassess the story of paganism and pagans between 337 and 361, to show that, in fact, this seeming interlude was a crucial period for the traditional religion and its adherents. To this end, the discussion will not only cover the official measures taken by the emperors against pagan cults but also try to reconstruct the perspective of the pagans themselves. After all, "paganism" should no longer be studied exclusively from the viewpoint of its Christian despisers; rather, analysing the ways in which pagans themselves experienced their religion and the challenges they faced will lead to a more balanced account. This points immediately to the heart of the debate because the term "paganism" itself has come under intense scrutiny over recent years.² Scholars have questioned whether it is appropriate to keep this term, in spite of its having been invented by Christians to label non-believers. Paganism is, thus, a relational concept, which lumps together what differs most dramatically from Christianity, and, moreover, carries negative undertones that cannot be completely eschewed.³ Although the question is still unresolved, it is apparent that we cannot abandon the received terminology completely without slipping into new inadequacies; alternative terms that have been suggested, in particular "polytheists", may sound more neutral and give, to a certain extent, a more adequate impression, but present their own problems as they fail to acknowledge the variety that can be found in pagan cults and among their worshippers. Consequently, it seems convenient to retain the conventional label, though with the awareness that it only pragmatically subsumes any adherence to and practice of cults that were neither Jewish nor Christian. With this in mind, the following

²North 2005; Cameron 2011; Jones 2014: 1–8.

³North 1992; Cameron 2011: 19–20.

discussion will also consider to what extent pagans under Constantine's sons became aware themselves of their own religious allegiance.

Terminological problems are not the only vexed issue in scholarship on our period, though. Above all, academics have concentrated on Constantius' legislation against paganism and argued that he mounted increasing pressure on his pagan subjects by restricting the practice of traditional cults.⁴ In contrast to this claim, more recent studies have attempted a reappraisal of his religious policy and put forward the view that Constantius, while occupied with inner-Christian controversies, steered a rather moderate course against paganism, at least at the beginning, on the whole following in the footsteps of his father.⁵ The key question is whether Constantius with his legislation merely continued what Constantine had inaugurated or deliberately began a new move towards intolerance and persecution. On a related note, imperial legislation as enshrined in the *Theodosian Code* raises the question of what "pagan" in these decades actually meant. So scholars are debating whether pagan religion was, as is generally believed, rather a matter of cult practice than a set of beliefs.⁶ At least, the ancient laws seem to suggest that the administration wanted to hit the religious non-conformists primarily by curtailing various forms of public and private worship. This topic ties in with another key question, namely, whether paganism in the fourth century suffered overall decline or managed to regain its old vitality. Can we, to put it that way, observe a marked decrease in public cult activity, especially blood sacrifice, or did pagans develop new and no less adequate ways of acting out their religious role? The notion of "pagan survivals", which is sometimes applied to this period,⁷ suggests that pagan practices were to a certain degree successful in evading imperial coercion and ecclesiastical control, and infiltrated Christian religious activity. On the other hand, some scholars argue for abandoning the concept of paganism altogether, downplaying the relevance of religious differences in a period when the boundaries of collective identities would have been rather permeable, and Christianity and paganism interpenetrated.⁸ One might, then, wonder whether paganism was not

⁴E.g. Curran 2000: 193.

⁵Leppin 1999.

⁶North 1992: 187.

⁷Cf. Markus 1990: 8–15; Maxwell 2012: 852, 857.

⁸E.g. Clark 2004: 14; North 2005: 126; Bowes 2008: 10–11.

a historical entity but a cultural construct invented by Church Fathers and the Christianised state in order to exert control over religious discourse.

In this controversial field, the following overview will focus not only on legislation and its effects, but also on religious practices and perceptions, to aim at a fuller picture of what paganism meant to both its adherents and adversaries and how pagan religion developed under Constantine's immediate successors. That said, we will never overcome one major obstacle to any study of late antique paganism. For a reconstruction of fourth-century paganism, we have to rely primarily on documentary and literary texts. More often than not, these sources originate from later times and do not necessarily reflect the conditions existing under Constantine II, Constans and Constantius. We cannot always gauge to what extent the views expressed in the accounts were shaped by later concerns so that they fitted the religious narrative of their writers. To complicate matters further, none of the ancient observers of the religious field, whether contemporary or later, was disinterested or detached from the tensions and struggles that were created by Christianity's rise to dominance. On one side of the playing field, the promoters of the new faith spread the fiction that pagan superstition met its deserved defeat by divine will; concomitantly, they represented the exponents of the traditional cults as stubbornly ignorant. On the other side, fervent pagans, such as Julian, attacked the "atheists" and extolled their own "martyrs". Neither group of authors can be considered an impartial witness to base an accurate account on. Unfortunately, archaeological evidence from this period, patchy as it is, can only in some places help to establish a more balanced view of pagan religion in the middle of the fourth century.

IMPERIAL POLICY

Much ink has been spilt on the vexed question of whether or not Constantine the Great immediately after his conversion took vigorous action against paganism. Although the Church Father Eusebius, undoubtedly familiar with imperial politics, states that the emperor gave orders not to sacrifice to idols, consult oracles and perform secret rites, scholars have questioned whether Constantine intended to suppress paganism by law and had the power to put his will into practice.⁹ Such a vigorous act of

⁹Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.25.1. See Barnes 1989: 322–325; Chuvin 1990: 30–35; Jones 2014: 16–17.

religious intolerance would not fit with the traditional role of the Roman emperor and, moreover, the incriminated activities continued well beyond his reign. Therefore, it is hard to discern to what extent his sons followed their father's example or went further towards increasing intolerance and coercion. On one occasion at least, Constans, threatening punishment for any who dared to sacrifice, claimed to merely replicate what his father had already proclaimed.¹⁰

When we turn to the legislation issued by Constans and Constantius on pagan matters we face the problem that the imperial laws have not come down to us in their original form. What we still possess is the collection in the *Theodosian Code*, a compilation constructed between 429 and 437 under the emperor Theodosius II. To use this collection as evidence for imperial legislation in the fourth century is not unproblematic because its compilers did not just gather what was available to them, but revised, abbreviated and arranged the letters so that only those aspects were included that seemed essential to them.¹¹ From this presentation it is hard to extrapolate how the original decrees would have looked like in form and content. Apart from that, the *Theodosian Code*, as we have it, gives the perhaps misleading impression that the fourth-century laws fell under clearly defined headings; we cannot know for sure whether the imperial administration actually applied such distinct concepts to the religious domain. Given the problematic nature of the evidence, we need to treat the transmitted texts with proper caution.

Notwithstanding, from the surviving legislation it emerges that the imperial brothers deemed it expedient to repeatedly issue decrees against pagan practices.¹² In 341 Constans in a constitution directed to the vicar of Italy banned pagan sacrifice, announcing that “superstition shall come to an end and the insanity of sacrifices shall be abolished”; that prohibition was reaffirmed by another letter the following year (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.2 and 3). A ban on nocturnal sacrifices was decreed by Constantius in November 353 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.5). The most significant and forceful move came when Constantius condemned sacrifice and pagan worship in general, a fundamental blow against pagan cults that was without clear precedent. His constitution of 356 stated, “It is Our pleasure that the

¹⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.2. Cf. Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 3.17.

¹¹ For the nature of the *Theodosian Code* see Matthews 2000.

¹² For anti-pagan legislation see Salzman 1990: 205–209; Leppin 1999: 466–475; Curran 2000: 181–193; Sandwell 2005: 90–97.

temples shall be immediately closed in all places and in all cities, and access to them forbidden, so as to deny to all abandoned men the opportunity to commit sin.”¹³ Any breach of this letter should carry death penalty, and the property of the executed would be confiscated. The closure of the temples was not Constantius’ main concern, though. What he wanted to prevent with this law was all pagan sacrifice at the sacred precincts, as his brother Constans did in the West. In February 356 another general letter, issued jointly with Julian as Caesar at Milan, reinforced the ban on the worship of images and on sacrifices and pronounced again that infringing the law would inflict capital punishment (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.6). A further letter, addressed in the following year to the people, attacked divination, prohibiting the consultation of various types of diviners, and declared the firm determination that “the inquisitiveness of all men for divination shall cease for ever” (*Cod. Theod.* 9.16.4).

The significance of these rulings cannot have been lost on either pagan or Christian subjects. Evidently, the emperors were inclined to tighten the control on religious practices in favour of Christian faith. However, when we take into account that the laws were issued on the request of individual magistrates in specific situations and targeted single religious practices it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the legislation does not reflect a consistent and determined attempt to suppress paganism altogether. Even though the imperial court was willing to exclude traditional forms of worship from acceptable religious activity, the legislation looks rather unsystematic, outlawing certain practices that were already marginalised, illicit divination and other forms of *superstitio*. Further, with regard to numbers, the laws specifically directed against pagans were but a small portion of the whole legislative activity under Constantine’s sons so that paganism cannot have been the overriding concern for the imperial legislators. At least for Constantius’ decrees, it can be argued that, to the same degree as the laws intended to put the screws on pagans, they were also meant to assuage grudges from the Christian side, namely, Athanasius and his followers; if the Arian emperor publicly displayed his firm stance against pagan superstition just as his brother Constans had done, he would have calmed down suspicions of sympathy for pagans, which orthodox polemic levelled against him.¹⁴ Finally, the lack of a consistent and comprehensive policy

¹³ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.4, directed to the Praetorian Prefect in Italy and Africa, Flavius Taurus.

¹⁴ Leppin 1999: 473–474.

might also indicate that the idea of “paganism” as a coherent group had still not been universally established.¹⁵

Official legislation, however, is but one side of the coin. The picture of imperial religious policy would be incomplete without a closer look at its immediate effects. Here we need to take into account that ancient legislation in general did not always lead to enforcement. To be sure, we do hear from later sources of a number of pagan temples that are likely to have been subjected to restrictions under Constantius. As one of his first measures in office, the emperor Julian in 362 ordered the repair and rebuilding of several sanctuaries, among others in Cyzicus, Gaza and Alexandria, that had been demolished or destroyed under his predecessor.¹⁶ In Alexandria, the attacks of bishop George against temples are especially well documented and elsewhere similar violent assaults seem to have taken place. George plundered the shrine of Serapis and also eyed the temple of Genius, which caused some unrest in the city. Constantius is said to have transferred a Mithraic sanctuary to the Alexandrian Church, and George, supported by the *dux Aegypti* Artemius, immediately started cleansing the site and erecting a church on it.¹⁷ After news of Constantius’ death arrived, the bishop was lynched by a pagan mob, in vengeance for his onslaught on the shrine. Further, in 357 the emperor ordered the altar of Victory to be removed from the Senate House in Rome.¹⁸ While action against temples is widespread in the historical record, we possess not a single piece of evidence for the execution of pagans for the performance of religious practices, despite the harsh threats announced by the laws. Much activity was clearly beyond the reach of the state and so the legislation would have had only limited effects.

The emperors themselves, it seems, were fully aware that it was neither feasible nor expedient to eradicate all pagan worship vigorously. In a wise move to soothe pagan anxieties, they decided to retain the venerable title of the *pontifex maximus*. While reaffirming the ban on superstition, Constantius in a letter even conceded that the temples outside the city walls of Rome could remain standing as they were connected to “long established amusements”.¹⁹ What is more, Constantine’s sons, although

¹⁵ Cf. Maxwell 2012: 862.

¹⁶ Lib., *Or.* 18.114, 24.36, 30.6–7; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 5.5.5; Barnes 1989: 325–328.

¹⁷ Julian., *Ep.* 21 (Loeb; *Ep.* 60 in Belles Lettres); Amm. Marc. 22.11.6–8; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 3.2; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* 5.7; Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 3.18. Hahn 2004: 66–71.

¹⁸ Symm., *Relat.* 3.7; Ambrose, *Ep.* 18.32.

¹⁹ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.3, issued in 342 to the Urban Prefect of Rome.

preferring Christian men as officials, refrained from excluding pagans from the high ranks in administration and military.²⁰ As the cases of the Urban Prefect Vitrasius Orfitus in the West and the philosopher Themistius in the East show, it was still possible for the followers of the traditional gods to advance to the upper levels of the imperial hierarchy. Orfitus served repeatedly as prefect, and Themistius, one of the leading senators in Constantinople, was in charge of selecting new members to the eastern Senate.²¹ During Constantius' reign the influence of pagans in the imperial administration diminished, while Christians were on the rise; nevertheless, pagans remained in the higher ranks, in particular in the West, where the emperor was faced with a firm grip on politics by pagan aristocrats. And when Constantius paid a visit to the old capital in 357 he, captured by the ancient grandeur of the Eternal City, co-opted new members into the traditional priesthoods and confirmed their endowments.²² All these conciliatory gestures towards the pagan elites, occasional as they might be, indicate that court and administration were far from pursuing a systematic and total oppression of paganism within the confines of the empire. When we do learn of anti-pagan activities, they apparently rather depend on local conditions and energetic individuals than on a declared official strategy.²³ Hence, the evidence for effective suppression of paganism by the state tells a different story than the aggressive wording of the constitutions intimate.

Nonetheless, it would be rash to discount the impression that the imperial encroachment upon religious activity of pagans had. One area where we discern a considerable impact is the measures against magic. As already mentioned, imperial constitutions also prohibited the use of divination and the consultation of experts to learn about the future.²⁴ Significantly, they included in the criminal acts the use of not only magic, but also *haruspices*, other diviners and the use of temples for divination. The historian Ammianus informs us that these laws were actually applied and led to the

²⁰For the influence of religion on the appointment of imperial officials see Barnes 1989: 312–321; Leppin 1999: 463–465.

²¹*Cod. Theod.* 6.4.12. Cf. Vanderspoel 1995: 108. Cf. the case of the pagan philosopher Eustathius, who was elected by Constantius for an embassy to Persia (Eunap., *VS* 6.5.2–10; Amm. Marc. 17.5.15).

²²Symm., *Relat.* 3.7; Amm. Marc. 16.10. Salzman 2002: 189–190.

²³Cf. Barnes 1989: 325–326.

²⁴*Cod. Theod.* 9.16.4, further 9.16.5–6.

infamous treason trials of Scythopolis in 359.²⁵ There, Constantius set up a court and put two Christian officials in charge of dealing with accusations of magic. The laws behind the trials were, it is true, neither innovative nor outspokenly anti-pagan as magic was practised across the religious spectrum. However, by framing augurs and *haruspices* as criminals, they outlawed professions that were an integral part of pagan tradition and priesthoods. No wonder, then, that the trials, as Ammianus and Libanius say, stirred fear and panic among pagans, and naturally so, as pagans now became liable to prosecution for their inherited practices even if they had not been practising magic at all.²⁶ We see here how the emperors as authors of the laws assumed the right to define what paganism was and so objectified pagans.

It is doubtful whether the imperial law code and practical measures reflect a clear concept of paganism as a distinct religious allegiance. And yet, the way the administration treated traditional forms of worship marginalised pagan practices and restricted the possibilities of acting out pagan religion. Long-accepted worship suddenly became a criminal offence so that, the pagan sources tell us, it required some courage to act against the laws.²⁷ The official line created an atmosphere of pressure and suspicion that must have given the feeling of the empire and what was once “religion” drifting apart.

ANTI-PAGAN VIOLENCE, PHYSICAL AND VERBAL

To take this a step further, it is worth noting that what matters is not exclusively the actual effects of anti-pagan moves, but likewise the discourse that sets the tone. Although the effectiveness of religious legislation on the ground was limited, its definition and labelling of what was accepted and what not contributed immensely to drawing clear lines of demarcation between religious groups and identities. Hitherto unobjectionable terms such as augurs and divination now became missiles to hurl at the “others” and stigmatise them. The forcefulness with which Christians engendered a hostile atmosphere through discourse is already to be found

²⁵ Amm. Marc. 19.12; cf. Lib., *Ep.* 37; *Or.* 14.15–19. Barnes 1998: 91–92; Sandwell 2005: 114–116.

²⁶ Lib., *Ep.* 37, 77, 112; Amm. Marc. 14.1.2; 14.7.7; 19.12.12 and 19; Claudius Mamertinus 23.4. Cf. Sandwell 2005: 119–120.

²⁷ Lib., *Or.* 14.15–19 and 41–43, 1.27 and 201; Julian., *Ep.* 36.423c (Loeb; *Ep.* 42 in *Belles Lettres*).

in the period of Constantine, when the emperor's vocal supporter, Eusebius, aggressively took aim at "pagans" and disseminated the fiction that the Christian ruler had wiped pagan stubbornness off the face of the earth.²⁸ Under Constantine's sons, verbal attacks against pagans reached new heights. About AD 345, the Roman senator Firmicus Maternus addressed a pamphlet to Constans and Constantius, urging them to take immediate action against religious dissenters.²⁹ Originally a pagan, he had composed a treatise on astrology, before he converted to Christianity. His second work, entitled *On the Error of Profane Religions*, reiterated arguments against the traditional cults that were familiar from earlier Christian apologetics. Yet, the emperors' Christian faith now raised the prospect of an effective policy against paganism, and so Firmicus appealed to the emperors to bring about their subjects' conversion by all means—even by brute force. "These practices must be eradicated, Most Holy Emperors, utterly eradicated and abolished", he said with regard to pagan cults and proceeded, "All must be set aright by the severest laws of your edicts, so that the ruinous error of this delusion may no longer besmirch the Roman world, so that the wickedness of this pestilential usage may no longer wax strong." To extinguish idolatry Firmicus even summoned the emperors to confiscate and melt down all the votive offerings in pagan temples.³⁰ Such a strident attack against paganism was unheard of before and marks a new level of intolerance. However, there is no evidence that Firmicus' petition had any effect on official decision-making or the activities of individuals. After all, such a request for a crusade against traditional religion would not have fallen on fertile ground at court because Constans needed the cooperation of the still predominantly pagan Senate. Taken together with the texts of the constitutions, Firmicus' fierce pamphlet shows that fervent supporters of Christianity now sought to define what paganism was and thereby underlined division instead of a common ground. It is conceivable that the inimical atmosphere generated by them would incidentally have shaped also the perception by pagan intellectuals of their own religion.

Christian fanatics did not stop with verbal aggression, though. Unfortunately, when we turn to physical violence against pagans and pagan religion between 337 and 361 we have to rely largely on literary sources because religious conflicts have not left sufficient archaeological

²⁸ Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.57; 4.23–25, 75.

²⁹ Cf. Kahlos 2009: 69–72.

³⁰ Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 16.4; 28.6.

traces.³¹ Unsurprisingly, pagan authors writing after Constantius' death blame him for violent persecution. The emperor Julian accused his imperial predecessors of demolishing the ancestral temples and stripping them of the votive offerings. Under Constantius, he adds, the worship of the gods had to be undertaken in secret.³² Further, Julian's admirer Libanius, who made no bones about his contempt for Constantius, intimates that the Christian emperor not only suppressed sacrifice but also allowed temples to be dismantled, their altars to be overturned and their property to be divided up. From one of the sophist's letters we can infer that probably several Christian officials and their families appropriated temple possessions.³³

Moreover, where the Christian camp seemed dominant, powerful leaders attempted to tackle their pagan opponents with physical violence. In Alexandria, as has been mentioned above, the Arian bishop George immediately after his appointment felt strong enough to suggest the destruction of a pagan sanctuary. Although the cleric's fanatically anti-pagan policy is firmly attested and rested on imperial legislation, it is hard to determine on the basis of the accounts in the Church historians to what extent pagans were involved in and affected by the inner-Christian clashes in the city under Constantius.³⁴ The Christian sources tell a story of hatred and violence between religious groups and judge the events as yet another instance in the Christian defeat of paganism, but these views are evidently informed by traditional polemic. And in Daphne, Antioch's suburb famous for its splendid temple of Apollo, the Caesar Gallus ordered the remains of the saint Babylas to be buried within the sacred precinct to silence the god's oracle.³⁵ This forceful demonstration of Christian domination made a lasting impression well into the fifth century. Christian bishops and clerics in other cities, for instance, Mark of Arethusa, also took the initiative in destroying pagan shrines and sometimes suffered retaliation when pagans regained confidence under Julian.³⁶ The picture that the ancient sources draw of such events is, however, not unproblematic since the accounts stem from resolute and fanatic writers, who had an interest in highlighting heroes and violence. We cannot always reconstruct who was responsible

³¹ For Christian violence against pagans see Hahn 2004, 2011: 237–241.

³² Julian., *Or.* 7.228b–c; Julian., *Ep.* 19 (Loeb; *Ep.* 79 in *Belles Lettres*).

³³ Lib., *Or.* 1.27; 14.15–19; 14.41–43; 18.23; 30.6–7; *Ep.* 819.

³⁴ Hahn 2004: 54.

³⁵ Shepardson 2014: 58–67.

³⁶ Barnes 1989: 326–329; Leppin 1999: 476–477.

for violent acts and who took part in them. Yet, the impression given by the contemporary sources is that violent attacks were isolated events, not the rule, and that they were down to the initiative of local officials, which did not necessarily involve orchestration by the imperial administration.

It is, thus, beyond question that in some places of the empire violent tensions between pagans and Christians broke out and that pagans were victims of religious aggression. These events, however, do not seem to have been the norm at the time, although we cannot rule out that anti-pagan violence under Constantius was more widespread than the sources suggest.³⁷ Once again, we can only speculate that such clashes would have been a catalyst for greater awareness of religious loyalties and differences on both sides and so added to divisions and hostility. Every violent act must have made pagans ever more aware that, with the emperors' favour, the tide was turning for Christians so that less room was left for living pagan religion in public.

PAGAN PRACTICES

Traditional religion was characterised by observing specific cult activities, that is, by orthopraxis, rather than a fixed set of beliefs; the idea of dogma or doctrine was fundamentally alien to the adherents of the pantheon, even though theological thinkers such as Plato and Cicero discussed appropriate and inappropriate notions of the divine. What was essential in the religious sphere was rather the distinction between public and private, with some forms of worship connected with the welfare of the state and others confined to family and household.³⁸ The modern separation of sacred and secular, by contrast, did not apply to ancient religion, as no part of human life was deemed exempt from divine oversight. This outward nature of pagan religion makes it hard for us, if not impossible, to assess the personal beliefs of pagans because we are only rarely allowed a glimpse into religious thinking, while practices do not automatically reveal personal convictions. Furthermore, when we do have evidence of thinking about the gods, for instance, in Libanius' and Themistius' writings, the views set out there have to be understood as shaped by literary convention and situational considerations rather than by deeply personal feelings.³⁹

³⁷ See Barnes 1989: 328; Hahn 2011: 238–239.

³⁸ Bowes 2008: 20–48.

³⁹ For Libanius, see now Cribiore 2013.

Sophists and orators in the fourth century display a fairly traditional image of the pagan deities, embedded in the literary tradition, whereas most philosophers tend to promote concepts of the divine that draw on Neoplatonism.⁴⁰ Yet, it is far from evident that we should clearly dissociate philosophical or intellectual religion from popular and hence “naïve” reverence for the gods. After all, Libanius and others did not harbour fundamental doubts about inherited and widespread practices such as sacrifice and divination. Therefore, we should allow for a broader spectrum of options available to the pagan worshipper, instead of privileging one type of activity.

If there is one practice that is emblematic of ancient paganism it is definitely sacrifice, in particular blood sacrifice. Every festival and ceremony and almost every ritual included some kind of offering to the gods, based on the concept of an exchange relationship between mankind and the higher powers. And as noticed above, making sacrifices was the one feature that Christian opponents and legislation picked out as a natural target.⁴¹ We possess clear evidence that in the time of Constantine’s sons, despite the attempts at prohibition, pagan cult practice continued in all parts of the empire. Ammianus, for instance, for the year 359 reports public sacrifices by the Urban Prefect of Rome in the temple of Castor and Pollux at Ostia, and Eunapius in his *Lives of the Sophists* mentions that the Praetorian Prefect Anatolius, while staying in Athens, worshipped the gods with offerings and visited the major temples there.⁴² With Constantius’ anti-pagan legislation already in place, his cousin Julian on his trip to the Troad visited the distinguished sanctuaries of Ilium and met a priest who still ventured to offer prayers and worship the gods in secret.⁴³ Given that the imperial legislators and Christian fanatics were taking aim at pagan cult practice, the offering of sacrifices, in particular if carried out under the eyes of the public, would have been an instrument of discrimination, an act of provocation towards the ever-increasing dominance of Christians. Accordingly, pagan sources emphasise the risk that it carried to cling on to this type of worship.

All the same, we cannot fail to notice that around the middle of the fourth century a significant process was well under way. The available

⁴⁰ Cf. Siniosoglou 2010.

⁴¹ For the early Christian debate on animal sacrifice see Ullucci 2012.

⁴² Amm. Marc. 19.10.1–4; Eunap., *VS* 10.6.3. Cf. Lib., *Ep.* 1351.

⁴³ Julian., *Ep.* 19 (Loeb) (*Ep.* 79 in Belles Lettres).

evidence suggests that across the empire cult practice saw a steep decline since the third-century AD.⁴⁴ We cannot, however, attribute this drop simply to paganism's fading away, as Christian sources want us to believe. The image that we can establish is far more complex. On the one hand, there were trends among pagans towards downplaying the relevance of material offerings and favouring instead spiritual sacrifice as alone appropriate to the higher gods; this intellectual form of worship gained currency especially among Neoplatonic circles in the wake of Porphyry's criticism of blood sacrifice.⁴⁵ And as the lukewarm or dismissive responses of Ammianus and Libanius to Julian's revival of cult practice indicate, even traditional pagans considered sacrifices as non-essential.⁴⁶ Other followers of Neoplatonism, by contrast, revelled in excessive sacrificial activity, as did the initiates of some mystery cults. On the other hand, since the religious life of the cities relied heavily on private benefaction, the decline of euergetism and changes in lifestyle from the third century onwards had a profound impact on spending on sacrifices, that is to say, the reduction in offerings depended on factors that had little to do with religion per se. On the whole, the interplay of these changes brought about a transformation of paganism, shifting the emphasis from material offerings to other types of worship.

A similar picture of continuity and disruption emerges from what we know of traditional festivals in the fourth century, a field that was equally affected by changes in the economic climate. Celebrations and *ludi* of traditional appearance continued well into the fourth century, the clearest evidence of which is the so-called Chronography of 354; this illustrated calendar, probably commissioned by a Christian aristocrat in Rome and displaying pagan and Christian dates in parallel, documents that pagan festivities, and iconography, still put their mark on the everyday life of the people.⁴⁷ Constans' constitution referred to above and literary texts also show that traditional celebrations, which had their roots in pagan cult, continued to appeal to a wide audience. However, the way these festivals were enjoyed and perceived apparently changed, depending on the also changing circumstances and perhaps accelerated by the imperial hostility towards pagan cults. What can be discerned in many events, for instance,

⁴⁴ Bradbury 1995.

⁴⁵ Bradbury 1995: 332–341; Rives 2011.

⁴⁶ Amm. Marc. 22.12.6–7, 25.4.17, Lib., *Or.* 12.80, 18.170. Ullucci 2012: 147–148.

⁴⁷ Salzman 1990.

in the famous Olympic Games of Antioch, is that they were losing their religious fingerprint and so becoming acceptable to the Christian population, too.⁴⁸ By shifting the focus onto secular components and entertainment, both the organisers of the festivals and the gathered audience turned them into mainly secular events, which, instead of forming a religious community, rather contributed to creating a local identity.

In contrast to the monotheistic religions Judaism and Christianity, Graeco-Roman religion always easily assimilated foreign gods, cults and rituals. This flexible and inclusive approach is no less true of paganism and its practices in late antiquity. Especially in the fourth century, Greek and Roman pagans not only used to worship their pantheon in the traditional ways, but also embraced alien cults, in particular those of oriental origin. The widespread worship of the Indo-Iranian god Mithras, who was often identified with Sol, or the mysteries of the Phrygian Magna Mater, a goddess of fertility, seemed perfectly compatible with traditional polytheism even if some of their rituals might have put off one or the other contemporary observer.⁴⁹ The emperor Julian's prose hymns to King Helios and to the Mother of the Gods, although composed after Constantius' demise, can be regarded as indicative of at least some pagans' wish to conflate such eastern cults with the traditional gods in a syncretistic manner. These discourses set out an amalgam of traditional myths and the mystery-theology of the emperor. Other supporters of Neoplatonism, following Iamblichus' lead, saw no problems in practising the esoteric rites of theurgy, which included, among other things, divination by magic characters and performing rites with cult images to conjure the divine.⁵⁰ However, it is not clear to what extent ordinary pagans without the philosophical background approved of these innovations in cult; but even Roman senators, otherwise known for upholding their ancestral traditions, were ready to adopt some of the oriental forms of worship.

Pagan practice is likely to have been affected also by another trend that has attracted much scholarly attention over the past years. Literary texts, in particular those of philosophical provenance, give the impression that many pagan intellectuals were no longer satisfied with the theological issues caused by a polytheist religion, but tended to replace the variegated

⁴⁸ Markus 1990: 107–110; Bradbury 1995: 353–354.

⁴⁹ For the Mithras cult see Beck 2006; for the Roman adoption of foreign cults see Salzman 2002: 63–64.

⁵⁰ See now Tanaseanu-Döbler 2013.

pantheon with a sublime concept of a single divine entity; this tendency had already been initiated by Platonic theology. Modern scholars who argue for a grey area between pagans and Christians have taken this as evidence for monotheistic theology among late antique pagans, which would level down the differences between the competing belief systems and facilitated conversion to Christianity.⁵¹ It is doubtful whether the ancients themselves would have applied such a classification to their religious experience and, furthermore, it can be argued that pagan monotheism was an exclusively intellectual phenomenon, without any contact with traditional religion or the lower classes. This question can hardly be settled because monotheistic tendencies are otherwise ill documented. Notwithstanding, there is at least attestation of one widespread form of worship with monotheistic features across the eastern Mediterranean into the fourth century. Inscriptions provide a coherent picture of a unified phenomenon, with some local variation, that emphasised the humility of the followers of the Highest Deity, Theos Hypsistos, in the face of god's supreme power.⁵² Although clearly different from monotheism in the strict sense, the cult of the Hypsistarians involved a number of rites that were based on belief in a unique and transcendent god so that it seems legitimate to apply the notion of monotheism here.

When we survey cult practice around the middle of the fourth century we can discern, despite the scarcity of undisputable evidence, that paganism continued to live and be visible in private and in public, in resistance to the oppressive legislation. We need to recall that, although accurate numbers are not attainable, pagans were still the majority of the empire's population. What becomes apparent from the available evidence on religious activity and its theological basis is that paganism was not a coherent and standardised system, but took many different forms, depending on local traditions, situational circumstances and personal tastes.⁵³ Regarding regional variation, Neoplatonic theology and theurgic rituals, for example, seem to have appealed more to the Greeks, whereas the senatorial elite in the Latin West stuck to the ancestral Roman religion. However, as we have seen, paganism did not sink into a state of torpor, while Christianity experienced a meteoric rise. Pagans still adopted foreign, sometimes bizarre types of worship to satisfy specific religious needs and so, to a certain

⁵¹ Athanassiadi and Frede 1999; North 2010; Mitchell and Van Nuffelen 2010.

⁵² Mitchell 2010.

⁵³ For regional variation in paganism see, e.g., North 1992; Hahn 2004.

extent, transformed Graeco-Roman religion. Moreover, as far as performing rituals in public is concerned, pagan worship became a matter of deliberate choice, even a daring act, and, thus, turned into conscious self-positioning in a changing religious landscape.

PAGAN PERCEPTIONS

Religious identities are not exclusively based on practices and rituals, although these contribute significantly to the creation of a group; of no less importance are perceptions and cultural constructions by the members of the religious community and outsiders alike. One way to escape the one-sided and often malignant constructions by Christians is the examination of perceptions by the pagans themselves. Having said that, we must be aware that pagan accounts, for the most part looking backwards on the period of Constantius, have been written by assertive, if not fanatic pagans, who can hardly be considered perfectly representative of ordinary people. Moreover, their views have been shaped by specific circumstances, crucially by the reaction of the emperor Julian.

These vested interests are strikingly visible in the official and semi-official accounts that have been produced and disseminated during the short reign of “the Apostate”. Unanimously, though with nuance in detail, panegyric orations composed by, for instance, Libanius and Claudius Mamertinus draw the picture of overall decline accelerated by the Christian emperors, which was only stopped by Julian’s bold change of course. Among the many signs of infection that the empire suffered under Constantius the suppression of traditional religion, according to the panegyrists, was one of the most severe and outrageous. Claudius Mamertinus, when delivering the oration thanking Julian for appointing him consul, claims that the emperor has restored culture, philosophy and all that was neglected and suspicious under his predecessor, and now it was again possible to observe the stars and heaven without fear.⁵⁴ In similar terms, the sophist Libanius says in several speeches that Julian, after a miserable period of constraints, reopened the temples and honoured the gods with offerings.⁵⁵ What these and other depictions suggest is that Julian’s pagan restoration was greeted with great enthusiasm throughout the empire, after many people had already maintained their allegiance to the gods

⁵⁴ Claudius Mamertinus 23.4–6.

⁵⁵ Lib., *Or.* 13.1–2, 13, 18.114, 24.36, 30.6–7. See further Himer., *Or.* 41.8.

before in secret. The bias of these accounts can hardly be overlooked: the supporters of Julian's policy sought to distribute the version, or rather fiction, of an overwhelmingly hostile and threatening atmosphere under Constantine's sons, when pagan "martyrs" put their lives at risk and dared to practise their belief only conspiratorially. Unsurprisingly, scholars have been quick to hypothesise a pagan "underground", preparing the ground for Julian's seizure of power.⁵⁶

Taking the pagan accounts as constructions with the benefit of hindsight, it is still remarkable how at least some pagan intellectuals attempted to create a coherent narrative that threw paganism as a religious group into sharp relief. These views, however, need to be measured against pagan sources which, to a certain degree owing to the literary form, tell a different story. The philosophical orator Themistius, working over several decades in the shadow of imperial power, nowhere hints that pagans were suffering persecution for their belief under Constantius. Instead, the way he talks about the nature of the deity and the imitation of god illustrates how pagans and Christians, in an official context, were able to find a common language of religious discourse. Without any obvious risk, he in his speeches addressed to Constantius referred to Zeus, the Homeric gods and even to worship of the god by sacrifices and offerings.⁵⁷ And the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, it is true, noted violent attacks by Christians against pagan sanctuaries and adumbrated a climate of suspicion that threatened pagan worship during Constantius' rule; further, he made no secret of his disdain for excesses of doctrinal feuds among Christians and criticised the luxurious life of clerics. But although he stood firmly on the side of his hero Julian and prominent pagans he did not subscribe to the idea that the emperor had brought back the golden age of paganism. As a religious traditionalist, he refrained from open partisanship, aiming instead at a more nuanced picture.⁵⁸ Evidently, not all pagans were blinded by Julian's propaganda.

Pagan concerns in the West provide additional perspectives on religion. The Roman aristocrat Symmachus could even, admittedly decades later and with his own interests in mind, credit the emperor Constantius for

⁵⁶ Drinkwater 1983. See, for instance, Lib., *Or.* 14.41–43; 18.114.

⁵⁷ E.g. Them., *Or.* 1.2d–3a, 8a–c; 2.25a, 29a, 34b–d; 3.48b–c; 4.55d, 61a. We may add here that Libanius scourged the pagan sophist Bearchius for employing his oratory to praise a new church building erected by Constantius (*Or.* 1.39).

⁵⁸ For Ammianus' stance on religious matters see Barnes 1998: 79–94; Jones 2014: 111–112.

tolerance towards pagan customs and cults. Constantius, he claimed, had seen pagan temples in the Eternal City with respect even though he was of a different religion.⁵⁹ Such an image, distorted though it is, points to the fact that pagans in the Roman Senate experienced the religious landscape differently than their eastern peers. The senators still saw themselves as champions of the ancestral traditions, including religious customs and cultic practice.⁶⁰ They used to care for the state cults and fill the Roman priesthoods as ever, regarding these duties as part of their responsibility. To display their commitment the leading elite continued to make lavish dedications to the gods. In the years 356–359, the Urban Prefect Vitrasius Orfitus conspicuously dedicated a temple to Apollo in Rome.⁶¹ Senatorial inscriptions boasted of pagan priesthoods and membership in oriental cults. The traditional way of worshipping the gods was, it seems, part of the senatorial aristocratic status culture. In the same way as prestigious offices, public priesthoods allowed the leading men to play an important role in the state and thereby gain public recognition. Expenditure for cult enabled the elite to demonstrate social inequality and enhance their status in the Roman society. Probably, they did not conceive of their religious identity primarily in terms of “belief”; what mattered more to them were social acceptance and the political dimension, the long-standing unity of empire and cult.

In a strikingly different way, leading men in the Greek East made pagan religion a cornerstone in their self-fashioning and self-display. Already prior to Constantius’ and Julian’s reigns, Christian authors had invented a pagan stereotype by labelling the others “Hellenes”; this label served to distinguish the non-believers from Christians and Jews and demarcate clear collective identities. Interestingly, some pagan intellectuals adopted this stereotype, now linking in turn their religious allegiance to Greek culture.⁶² Again, the evidence suggests that this defensive redefinition of cultural and religious traditions was to a large extent connected with Julian’s reversal in religious policy. When, after the demise of his imperial rival, Julian travelled through Asia minor to Syria, he in one letter complained that he could not find a single genuinely Hellenic person, that is,

⁵⁹ Symm., *Relat.* 3.3 and 7.

⁶⁰ Salzman 2002: 61–68.

⁶¹ *CIL* 6.45; Salzman 2002: 62–63. For widespread sacrificial activity in Rome see also Ambrose, *Ep.* 18.31.

⁶² Cf. Bowersock 1990; North 1992, 188–189; Stenger 2009.

no one who was able to perform sacrifices in the traditional manner.⁶³ The wording of the letter intimates that the attachment of paganism to Greek culture and ethnicity had already taken root in the minds of at least fervent adherents before Julian's advance to the throne. This is also what Libanius in July 362 puts forward in his welcome address to the emperor, where he expresses his gratitude and joy that finally the unity of Greek culture and worship have returned.⁶⁴ Further, he and Julian's later admirer Eunapius of Sardis claim that, despite Constantius' oppression, some champions of Hellenism had dared to maintain their loyalty to the set of Greek virtues which reverence for the gods forms part of.⁶⁵ It has to be said that not all Greek pagans promoted this vision of religious-ethnic identity. Libanius himself, for that matter, did not go as far as to reserve Greek learning for assertive pagans such as Julian's followers, nor did the diplomatic Themistius ventilate such views in his political and philosophical speeches. Not all educated men were inclined to make religious allegiance the centrepiece of their self-definition. Nonetheless, these occasional remarks indicate that the appearance of an ambitious competitor, Christianity, on the pitch inspired some pagans to reflect on the nature and relevance of their own beliefs.

Although the opinion of a Libanius or Eunapius can hardly count as an accurate and representative image of pagan self-perception, they shine light on a heightened awareness of religious affiliation and boundaries that would have been inconceivable before the fourth century. As Christians acted more confidently and aggressively, it was no longer possible to take the traditional cults for unquestioned realities. Consequently, pagan intellectuals felt under constraint to define their stance on the issue and sought in response to create a pagan consciousness.⁶⁶ Their views document a feeling of anxiety and being challenged by the changing conditions in the religious field. They also illustrate the various roles paganism could play in perceptions and constructions of the community.

⁶³ Julian., *Ep.* 35.375c (Loeb; *Ep.* 78 in *Belles Lettres*); 58.400c–d (Loeb; *Ep.* 98 in *Belles Lettres*). For the notion of Hellenic religion see also Julian's letter to Arsacius (*Ep.* 22, Loeb; *Ep.* 84a in *Belles Lettres*). Note, however, the debate about the authenticity of the letter to Arsacius: Van Nuffelen 2002; Bouffartigue 2005.

⁶⁴ Lib., *Or.* 13.1–2. See further 14.69; 17.1–2; 62.8. Stenger 2014.

⁶⁵ Eunap., *VS* 6.5.3; 10.6.3. See also Lib., *Or.* 1.27.

⁶⁶ Cf. North 1992: 189; North 2005: 137; Kahlos 2007: 18–19.

PAGANISM UNDER CONSTANTINE'S SONS: MORE THAN A CHRISTIAN CONSTRUCT

Imperial legislation of the 340/350s and literary texts produced by both Christians and pagans evoke the impression that the religious landscape during the period was dominated by conflict and the erection of boundaries; furthermore, many of them want us to believe that pagan religion under enormous pressure was facing the imminent threat of complete extirpation. A closer look, however, reveals that paganism under Constantine's heirs was anything but a negligible quantity that was destined to die out. Other than suggested by the literary evidence, religious matters were not always the primary concerns for the main agents and the ordinary people. The existing suppressive measures and violent attacks notwithstanding, it was still possible to follow the religious customs of traditional cult; the Roman emperors' pagan subjects all but bowed to pressure and converted to Christianity in hordes. By contrast, the reconstruction of pagan practices and perceptions rather supports the view of paganism as, not a unified entity, but a diversity in beliefs, rituals, practices and attitudes; traditional religion was neither homogeneous throughout the empire nor static. Pagans would have experienced the period under Constantine's successors each in their own ways, ranging from secret "resistance" to opportunism, from indifference to conversion. In the light of this variation it is difficult to pin down what "paganism" actually was in this time.

However we judge the degree of uniformity in paganism, it is safe to say that through the fourth century the adherence to Graeco-Roman religion gained new significance, and this process was inaugurated by Christianity's rise to dominance. As Christians climbed to the top of the empire and voiced their disgust at the traditional cults more vehemently, the room for practising and displaying pagan allegiance in public contracted. Facing sanctions by the administration and aggression by Christian fanatics, pagans had to think twice whether it was essential for them to perform rituals and make dedications under the eye of the public. Pagan religious identity, though not meaning to all adherents the same, could no longer be taken as unproblematic or simply given because it would now be understood as a deliberate self-positioning. Hand in hand with this change in significance went another development, namely, the gradual transformation of traditional religion. The decline in public worship, the intellectualisation of religion in some circles, monotheistic tendencies and the

intensified interest in theurgic practices: all these trends, though far from affecting paganism as a whole, meant that the face of paganism was changing and, to some degree or other, becoming more similar to what Christian prejudice framed as pagan. It would, however, be misleading to subsume all visible transformations under the umbrella narrative of complete demise; some of them rather shed light on the ability to accommodate. Yet, what they jointly indicate is that there were in fact striking and significant differences between religious traditionalists and Christian believers. Recent studies point to the extensive common ground that still formed the bedrock of late antique society and the fluidity of religious identities as the norm in that time; and it is certainly true that Christian practices and ideas displayed overlap with pagan ones.⁶⁷ That should not prevent us from acknowledging that paganism was not merely a cultural construction by Christian opponents, let alone a modern label devoid of meaning, but had a firm basis in reality and meant something to its followers.

The objective differences and boundaries between Christians and pagans were reflected in the heightened awareness among pagan intellectuals of their religion although they did not consider it the exclusive identity marker. During and after Constantius' reign, treatises, speeches, homilies, letters, as well as social networks and religious activities underpinned this process so that by Julian's advance to power the religious playing field had changed its appearance. The competitive and sometimes hostile atmosphere that was created by discourse resulted in a perception of religion in terms of "them" and "us", with some pagans adopting the external perspective established by their adversaries. It was in this charged environment that the polarisation of Christian and pagan attitudes was brought about which towards the end of the century would pervade both discourse and policy.⁶⁸ Pagan self-consciousness was matched by an increased visibility of religious identities, most manifest in the materiality of religion and in customs. Without intending to do so, the promoters of Christian faith, not least the emperors themselves, contributed to lending to paganism a new quality.

⁶⁷ Brown 1992; Bowes 2008: 10–11; Maxwell 2012: 864–865; Jones 2014: 42–44.

⁶⁸ Markus 1990: 30.

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